

SCIENTISTS AND JOURNALISTS

VALENCIA Sept.2023
ALICIA RIVERA

- * Journalism Vs Science Popularization
- * Science and Technology Journalism
- * Scientists (from the point of view of Journalists)
- * Journalism and Science / Internet and Social Networks

(I have not a science background, I am not a scientist...
but I know whom should I ask for information about almost every
topic)

(I have worked mainly in newspapers, and although these, as well
as almost all media, have suffered a radical change through the
Internet, the basics are, or should be, the same)

SCIENCE JOURNALISM

- Science journalists deal with NEWS, as do our colleagues in other areas of a newspaper or any other media (economy, business, politics, foreign news, sports, cultural...)
- We deal with news related with:
 - * Discoveries, technology (Space included)
 - * R&D Policy and Budget
 - * Research programs
 - * Institutions and labs
 - * Problems and successes of the Science Community

Science and technology is an international activity....

So science journalism must be international, but with special attention to local (national) developments.

As any other journalist:

- News
- Interviews
- Reporting
- Popularization
- Stories that include several sections (news history, chronology, interview, article...)

Articles of scientist and experts (selecting, editing...)

MARTIN BARON (Washington Post)

- A journalist need objectivity, detachment (open mind), dealing with news. Must recognize that pure objectivity does not exist, that all of us have points of view and a journalist must know those personal points of view and try to put them aside as much as possible, looking for neutrality, impartiality.
- Objectivity does not means equilibrium in the sense of fake equivalence (Big Bang, Climate Change...)
- In some way the journalist does research when dealing with news or stories: try to learn things that she/he doesn't know, and must look for information, as many sources as possible, different approaches...

Is Science and Technology an important area in the media?

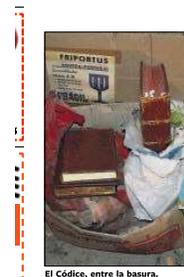
- Specific interest for the media
- Resources
- The quality and the results of the Science and Technology news affect the credibility they have for the boss

El País (a newspaper quite focused on politics) does not have Science and Technology pieces in the front page daily (as Politics, Business or Sports)
But there are stories and news in it if something is important.

EL PAÍS

vida&artes

ALICIA RIVERA



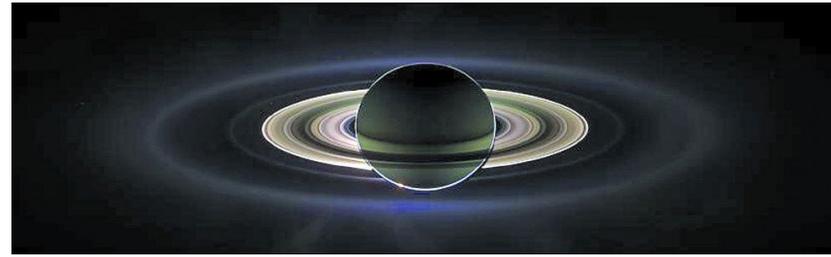
Part of the job of Science and Technology journalists is to support news and stories in other areas: The colleagues of Foreign News deal with a big earthquake , for instance, but a piece explaining the geophysics of the area, or an interview with an expert... are welcome.

Or Climate Change in Economy and Business and, obviously, more and more areas.

Health, Communication Technologies, Environment???? Different possibilities and options

Each media organizes the work in the newsroom with its own criteria, focus and interest... or according to the resources it has.

El País used to organize Science, Technology and Space in the section Sociedad (as in the reference USA newspaper (SMERSH – Washington Post)



Titán tiene lagunas de metano líquido

La nave 'Cassini' descubre en una luna de Saturno depósitos tal vez alimentados por lluvias

ALICIA RIVERA. Madrid
En un mundo lejano, una de las lunas en órbita del planeta de los anillos, los científicos han descubierto lagunas que deben ser de metano líquido. Ese mundo es

Titán, el único satélite del Sistema Solar con una densa atmósfera; allí debe haber lluvias torrenciales y tormentas, el relieve es accidentado y las temperaturas de ser de metano líquido. Desde hace años se sospechaba

que en ese mundo podría haber lagos o incluso mares de metano, pero la capa de nubes que lo envuelve impide ver bien la superficie con cámaras convencionales o telescopios. Por eso, los científicos han

recurrido al radar que lleva la nave Cassini—en órbita de Saturno—para penetrar esa densa neblina y distinguir detalles. Así han descubierto más de 75 lagunas en una franja de las latitudes altas de Titán.

Las lagunas, que en las imágenes del radar se aprecian como manchas oscuras, lisas, de forma circular uñas e irregular otras, en un entorno accidentado, tienen tamaños variados, entre tres y 70 kilómetros de diámetro; a su alrededor se aprecian canales que pueden ser flujos que las alimentan. Los científicos que las han descubierto y estudiado, liderados por Ellen Stofan, presentan hoy su hallazgo en la revista *Nature*. Aunque la composición no se puede determinar con el radar, "el metano es el más plausible candidato, ya que es una de las pocas moléculas que pueden estar en estado líquido en las condiciones de la superficie de Titán", comenta un especialista en la revista. Saturno y sus más de 30 lunas están a 1.500 millones de kilómetros de distancia media al Sol, casi diez veces más lejos que la Tierra; tan lejos está que la luz que parte

resume en *Nature* Christophe Sotin, científico de la Universidad de Nantes (Francia). Él comenta que el metano juega el papel del agua en la Tierra, con un ciclo de evaporación, condensación, precipitaciones y depósitos líquidos en la superficie, en invierno y verano. Y ese ciclo está sujeto al propio calendario del sistema de Saturno, cuyo año se prolonga 29,5 años terrestres. Titán ha despertado el interés de los científicos planetarios desde hace décadas por ese dinamismo que resalta Sotin. La hipótesis de los mares de metano, la meteorología y la densa atmósfera rica en nitrógeno incluso podría parecerse a la Tierra primitiva, antes de que surgieran los organismos vivos. "Titán es el Peter Pan de nuestro Sistema Solar, un mundo que nunca llegó a hacerse mayor, lo contrario que Marte, que es un mundo oxidado", comentaba hace unos años Tobias Owen de la Universidad de Hawai.

Por ello fue elegida esa luna de Saturno, con temperaturas medias de -180º, como objetivo de una de las misiones espaciales más importantes e innovadoras realizadas hasta ahora: el descenso de la sonda *Huygens*, de la ESA, que viajó hasta Saturno sujeta a la *Cassini* y que, ya en solitario, logró posarse en el suelo del satélite y tomar datos varias horas, durante la caída por la atmósfera y ya en el suelo. Entre la abundante información que obtuvo la *Huygens*, incluídas fotos del accidentado paisaje allí, no encontró lagos ni mares, pese a que tanta era la esperanza de los responsables de la misión que llegaron a plantearse si no pudiera acabar dándose un chaparrón de lugar de tocar suelo.

Ahora Stofan y sus colegas, entre los que destaca Charles Elachi, director del JPL y responsable del radar de la *Cassini*, sugieren que las lagunas en Titán se extienden durante el invierno en latitudes altas y se reducen en verano debido a la evaporación. Cuando el radar de la sonda espacial vio las lagunas allí—algunas llenas y otras no completamente—era invierno en el hemisferio norte. Puede que las condiciones meteorológicas, las lluvias, sean las responsables. Otra hipótesis es que los lagos se llenan a partir de depósitos de me-

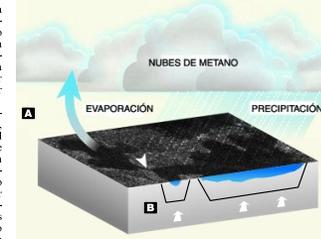
tano líquido en el subsuelo. Los últimos datos de la *Cassini*, con los canales que rodean las lagunas, parecen apoyar la primera hipótesis.

"Sobre la superficie de Titán se producen gigantescas tormentas capaces de generar densas nubes formadas por gotitas de metano líquido, un compuesto que jugaría en el ese mundo el mismo papel que el agua en la Tierra", apuntaba hace pocos meses el científico español Agustín Sánchez-Lavega (Universidad de Cantabria) que, junto a Ricardo Hueso, publicó un importante artículo en *Nature* el pasado verano sobre el desarrollo de tormentas de metano en Titán.

"A nuestro entender, estas tormentas son capaces de generar copiosas precipitaciones de metano mezclado con hidrocarburos de las partes inferiores de las nubes", apuntaban estos especialistas españoles. "Sembrarían en sus

de allí, a una velocidad de 300.000 kilómetros por segundo tarda hora y media en llegar a los telescopios terrestres. Pero el planeta y los anillos está siendo investigado de cerca desde hace dos años y medio, con la nave *Cassini*, de dos toneladas y cargada de cámaras e instrumentos científicos. Se trata de una misión de la NASA y de la Agencia Europea del Espacio (ESA)—con colaboración de la Agencia Italiana del Espacio—que tardó siete años en llegar a su destino y que, desde julio de 2004, está dando vueltas alrededor de ese gran planeta de los anillos, de manera que va pasando cerca de las diferentes lunas una y otra vez. En el sobrevuelo de Titán cumplido el 22 de julio pasado, el haz del radar barrió una franja de 6.130 kilómetros de longitud, entre los 70 y los 83 grados de latitud Norte. Y aparecieron los lagos. "Por lo que sabemos, sólo hay un cuerpo del sistema planetario que muestre más dinamismo que Titán y su nombre es la Tierra".

Los mares de Titán

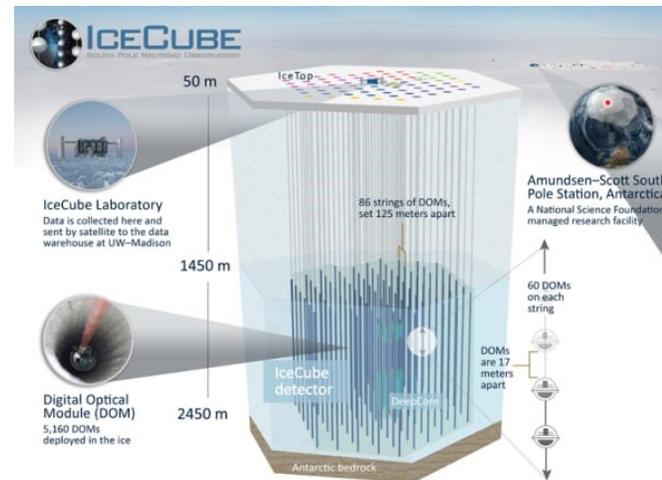
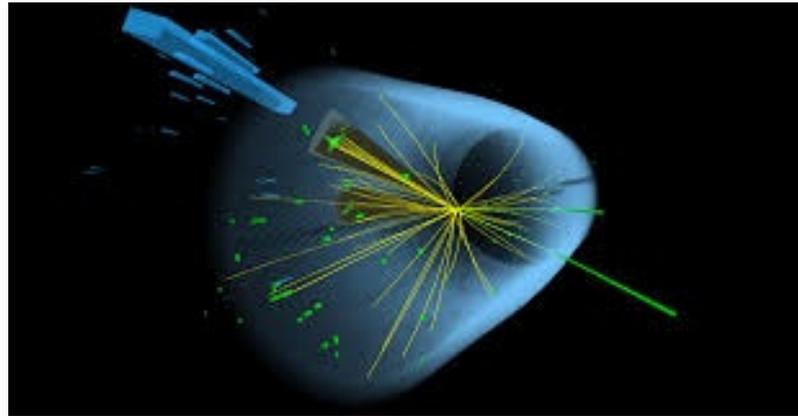


versiones más violentas a las más intensas trombas de agua que se producen en las tormentas terrestres". La precipitación podría ser capaz de alimentar los depósitos líquidos y ríos de metano líquidos. *Cassini* ha pasado ya una veintena de veces cerca de Titán y la próxima está prevista para el 13 de enero. Los científicos están pendientes de cada una de estas cosechas de valiosos datos, pero han calculado que durante toda la misión prevista de la nave espacial no se logrará rastrear con el radar más de un 15% de la superficie de ese mundo enigmático, mayor que el planeta Mercurio. Por ello Stofan y sus colegas concluyen su artículo en *Nature* lanzando un reto a las agencias espaciales: "Se requerirán futuras misiones espaciales en la superficie para entender a fondo los lagos de Titán, en particular cómo se formaron, su composición detallada y sus interacciones con sus costas". Pero de momento no se planea ninguna misión de descenso como la *Huygens*.

- News, and any topic related with Science and Technology must be selected with criteria of relevance and novelty.
- Do NOT select news and stories just because they are sparkling and/or easy to deal with. If a discovery is important and it's difficult to understand, to explain.... It's your problem (the journalist problem) how to deal with.
- Readers have the right to get good reliable information about anything that deserves to be published.
- Quite often a science topic very difficult today is not so in a few months or years (perhaps people learn the words: black hole, Higgs boson, quantum computing...)

There are areas difficult for journalists to deal with (quantum computing, HEP, cosmology, genetics...) and others are more easy (some areas of biology, space...).

- The journalist needs a wide net of good, reliable contacts, experts in as many areas as possible
- Good images help a lot:



Science popularization is more focused on education or entertainment than journalism. It does not necessarily stick to what is really news.

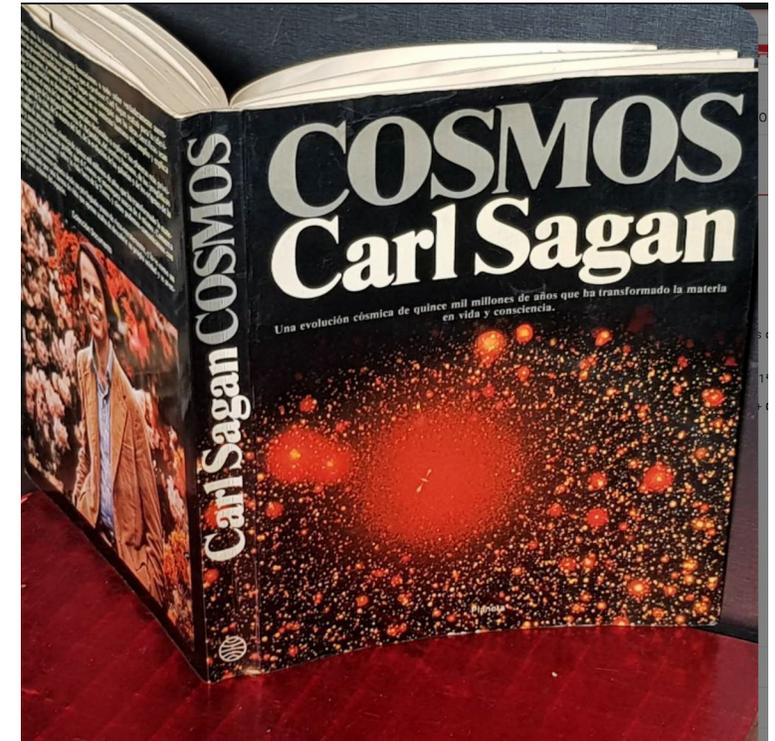
- Science and technology journalists use techniques of popularization very often to deal with news, but the focus is different.
- In newspapers, in any media, there is also room for science popularization (usually as support of the news)
- Science and Technology journalists also disseminate through:
 - * Schools
 - * Talks
 - * Dinner with Science (Barcelona)

CARL SAGAN

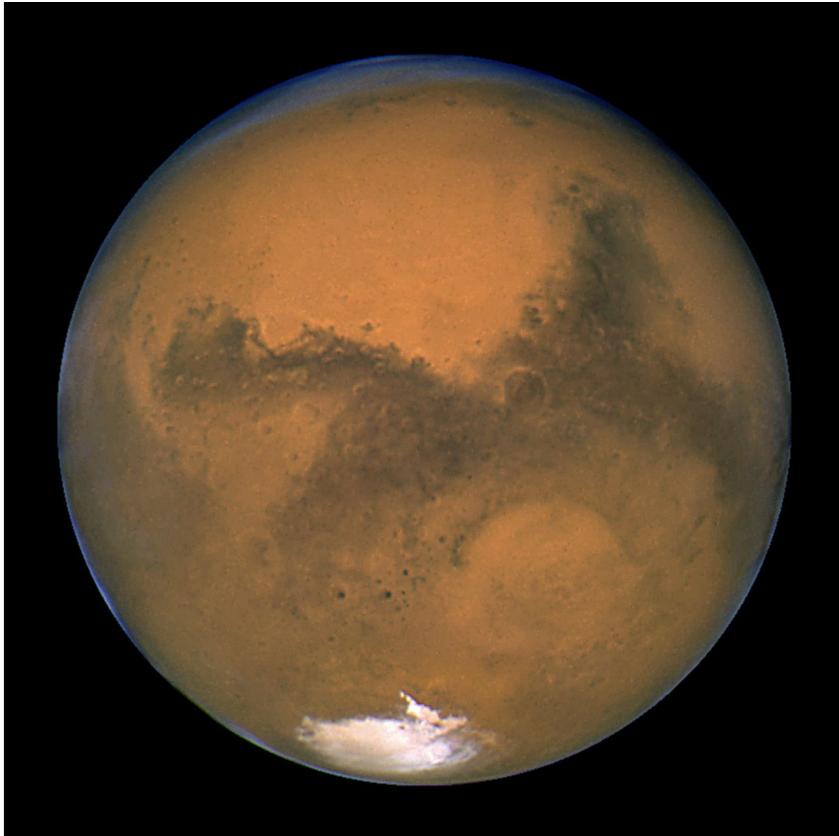
Probably the science popularisation superstar

Some scientists use to criticise him: Why?

Millions of people (of any age) were introduced to cosmology, space exploration, technology by his books and TV programs.



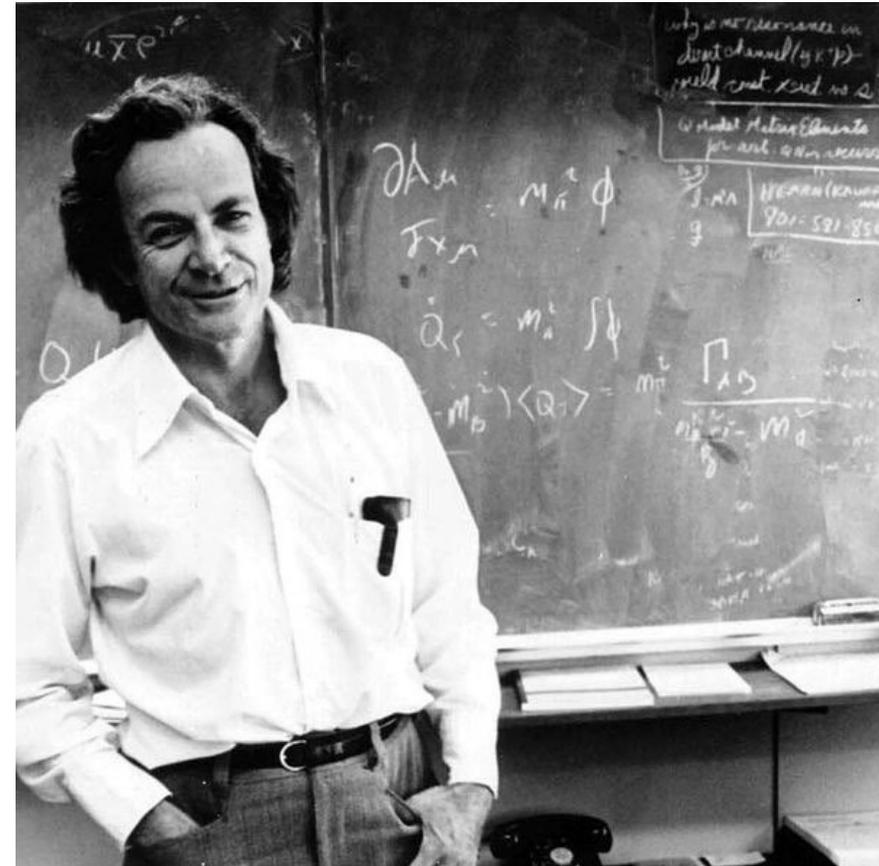
- A journalist cannot choose a topic just because its fascinating... or because *I love to write about it*. If it's not NEWS, you must look for an angle or opportunity to write about it.



For the Science Community it is compulsory to inform society about research, work, discoveries... Outreach, in one word.

Perhaps not everybody, not all of you, but as a community.

Some scientists (Richard Feynman) were very good popularizing science and technology and loved it, others not so much.





Most of the budget, specially for basic science, comes from the Government or from national or international institutions (taxes). Society deserves information about what's done with that money.

Scientists, when dealing with journalists, can expect rigor in the information about his/her job (in a way that can be understood by non specialists)

- He/she can check an interview, or citations...

- * Not to change the context

- * The journalist's criteria is important, but he/she should explain to the scientist why something is included and other parts of the interview or story are not.

- * Few conflicts in science and technology between scientists and journalists

JOURNALIST

- The journalist must check (two, three, four times..) and verify any information, in science and technology as in any other area.
- The journalist must have multiple sources and contacts, always with criteria of excellence.
- Young scientists are usually more difficult to deal with than the senior ones.
 - * They have quite often the *shadow of the boss* when speaking with a journalist.
 - * Maybe they don't have as deep a knowledge of the topic as the seniors.
 - * Usually they have not a long experience in teaching, as seniors, which is useful to explain things to non specialists, as is the case with journalists.

NEWS...Where?

Journals (embargoes)

Professional conferences and meetings of all sorts

Institutions

Direct sources

Contacts

Chance

Press offices

Web pages (with criteria)

If journals and meetings of high impact are important for scientists, they are also important for journalists when deciding what's news, what must be in the media.

The screenshot shows the Physical Review Letters website. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Journals', 'Physics Magazine', and 'Help/Feedback'. A search bar is present with the text 'Journal, vol, page, DOI, etc.'. Below the navigation is a green header with the text 'PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS' and a secondary navigation menu including 'Highlights', 'Recent', 'Accepted', 'Collections', 'Authors', 'Referees', 'Search', 'Press', 'About', and 'Editorial Team'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'ON THE COVER' featuring a colorful circular pattern and the article 'Untwisting Moiré Physics: Almost Ideal Bands and Fractional Chern Insulators in Periodically Strained Monolayer Graphene' by Qiang Gao et al.; 'JOURNAL CLUB' with the article 'Enhancing an electron beam source with a superconducting niobium tip'; 'Current Issue' for Volume 131, Issue 9, dated 1 September 2023, with a 'View Current Issue' button; 'Previous Issues' for various dates in August 2023; 'Email Alerts' with a 'Sign Up' button; and 'PRX LIFE' with the text 'First content now online'.

The screenshot shows the Nature journal website. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Explore content', 'About the journal', 'Publish with us', and 'Subscribe'. A search bar and 'Log in' link are also present. The main content area features a large article titled 'How would room-temperature superconductors change science?' with a sub-headline 'The prized materials could be transformative for research — but only if they have other essential qualities.' Below this are several smaller article teasers: 'Antarctic research stations have polluted a pristine wilderness', 'Concern at Cochrane: evidence giant battles funding cuts and closures', 'First observation of ^{28}O ' (Observation of ^{28}O and ^{27}O through their decay into ^{28}O and four and three neutrons), 'Daily briefing: Why parts of the Amazon have become a carbon source', and 'DRONE RACER'. The 'Science' logo is prominently displayed in the center. At the bottom, there are navigation links for 'NEWS', 'CAREERS', 'COMMENTARY', 'JOURNALS', and 'COVID-19', along with a 'BECOME A MEMBER' button and 'GET OUR E-ALERTS' link. Two large images of biological structures are shown at the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows the arXiv preprint server website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Cornell University' and a search bar. The main content area features the arXiv logo and a search bar with 'All fields' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there is a section for 'Physics' with a list of sub-fields: 'Astrophysics (astro-ph new, recent, search)', 'Condensed Matter (cond-mat new, recent, search)', 'General Relativity and Quantum Cosmology (gr-qc new, recent, search)', 'High Energy Physics - Experiment (hep-ex new, recent, search)', 'High Energy Physics - Lattice (hep-lat new, recent, search)', 'High Energy Physics - Phenomenology (hep-ph new, recent, search)', 'High Energy Physics - Theory (hep-th new, recent, search)', 'Mathematical Physics (math-ph new, recent, search)', 'Nonlinear Sciences (nlin new, recent, search)', 'Nuclear Experiment (nucl-ex new, recent, search)', 'Nuclear Theory (nucl-th new, recent, search)', and 'Physics (physics new, recent, search)'. Below this, there is a section for 'Mathematics' with a list of sub-fields: 'Algebraic Geometry', 'Algebraic Topology', 'Analysis of PDEs', 'Category Theory', 'Classical Analysis and ODEs', 'Combinatorics', 'Commutative Algebra', 'Complex Variables', 'Differential Geometry', 'Dynamical Systems', 'Functional Analysis', 'General Mathematics', 'General Topology', 'Geometric Topology', 'Group Theory', 'History and Overview', 'Information Theory', 'K-Theory and Homology', 'Logic', 'Mathematical Physics', 'Metric Geometry', 'Number Theory', 'Numerical Analysis', 'Operator Algebras', 'Optimization and Control', 'Probability', 'Quantum Algebra', 'Representation Theory', 'Rings and Algebras', 'Spectral Theory', 'Statistics Theory', 'Symplectic Geometry', and 'Topology'.

What a journalist looks for when contacting a scientist:

- Information about his/her research and/or discoveries
- Explanations that readers, or TV viewers.., can understand according to the media (generalist, specialized, internet, weekly, daily..)
- What's the right level? The journalist knows... One scientist told me that the level of El País was very low.... in their field... but OK in other fields.
- Analysis and implications of discoveries or programmes even if the scientist you're speaking with is not directly involved in a research or paper....
- Information and general explanations about his/her field of research (Very useful even if they are not quoted in the story)

- The journalist must prepare an interview or talk with a scientist (it's not enough to push *play* in the recorder).
- Journalism has not a full body of formal knowledge, as physics, so a lot depends on experience, *smell*, learning by doing it and making mistakes...
- There are very different media (and their journalists): some are big companies with a lot of resources, other are small, with few journalists dealing with everything
- It's very important, if a media can afford it, to have science journalists, people who can deal specifically with R+D, as any other area.
- The reference media, international and national, have a Science and Technology desk (some with several journalists specialised in different areas), others follow the big stories as they can.



NYT:

2.600 journalists

1.600 writers

SCIENCE, JOURNALISM ...

INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Journalism has changed (not the basics) a lot, and changes almost every day, with the WEB, social networks, internet for everybody....
- Science journalists live the changes since the beginning.
- 25 years ago we got the journals embargoes weekly by fax, then all that changed with e-mail.
- There are now, and about science and technology almost since the beginning, a lot of very good quality WEB pages (labs, universities, institutions, scientist individually....
- Immediate access to almost everything.
- Easy to get information, check everything, look for documentation...
- Criteria are always essential

- In the media in the WEB everything happens very fast, faster than before, and we were used to work fast in a daily newspaper! Nobel: just a few hours to write the news about the prizes usually dealing with difficult issues
- WEB media change almost every minute (not so much now as some years ago) and journalists have less time to look for information, think about it and write it.
- Journalists must have resources to deal with news, if you know about it previously or if it is unexpected.
- But even with rush and stress (so often in the newsroom), the work must be well done. Perhaps in the WEB it's better to publish a little bit later than other competitors but to avoid mistakes.

In the spotlight

- ALL
- STORIES
- VIDEOS
- IMAGES

MISSION

SCIENCE & EXPLORATION

euclid: exploring the dark universe

STORY

We recruit.
Not only astronauts.

AGENCY

ESA recruits – and not only astronauts. Apply now!

01/03/2023 177953 VIEWS 115 LIKES

VIDEO 00:04:20

SCIENCE & EXPLORATION

Euclid: Ready for launch

29/06/2023 1317 VIEWS 61 LIKES

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**Long History and Bright Future of
Space Sample Deliveries**

NASA Events

Sat., July 1, 10:30 a.m. EDT: Coverage of the Euclid spacecraft launch

Wed., July 12, 4 p.m. EDT: NASA Science Live presents Webb's First Year

[NASA TV Schedule](#)[Launches and Landings](#)



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HIGHLIGHTS



European
Southern
Observatory



ESO2309 — PHOTO RELEASE

'Smiling cat' nebula captured in new ESO image



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VNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

La Universitat

Estudis de Grau

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Recerca i Transferència

Relacions Internacionals

Cultura i Societat



Acte d'obertura curs 2023-2024

SOLEMNE ACTE D'OBERTURA DEL CURS ACADÈMIC 2023/2024
A LA UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA I OBERTURA OFICIAL DEL CURS ACADÈMIC

- About 80% or more of the news and stories that a science journalist deals with are expected (embargoes of journals, scientists who inform you, meetings, institutions, space launches, science programmes).
- The journalist must survey constantly the main topics and developments. Very few times a piece of news surprises a team of journalist which is working properly and is well organized.



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Blogs and social networks

- There are so many, and more and more every day. But for journalists, criteria and rigour must be always a basic priority, when selecting news and when dealing with them.
- I don't need to tell you my opinion of "I read (or see) it in the Internet..."
- The editor of the Washington Post whom I quoted before, says in that interview that everybody follows social networks, X (Twitter) and so on... but when something important happens, people go to the reference media to get proper information.
- In Science, we cannot consider a blog (even if it is of a well known scientist, honest...) as a peer reviewed and published paper.
- Do science journalists follow social networks and blogs...? Yes, although, in my experience, if you have a good net of sources and e-mails, you get better information.

- The almost universal access to communication, with the Internet and all the possibilities it offers, makes it easier for scientists to *speak* directly to society, without intermediaries...
- But remember that it is also very easy now the communication and diffusion of fake news (mistakes or manipulation), ideas of people without enough knowledge to deal with so many and complicated aspects of Science and Technology, and very often dishonest.
- Don't forget that to deal with news and Science and Technology topics you need training, experience, contacts, basic knowledge...
- The journalist needs time and resources to do his/her job.

I am sure that, specially in this environment of internet, social networks, blogs and so on., you can teach me much more that what I can tell you!

Gracias