

Science Outreach: scientists or journalists?

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Unprecedented progress of science makes its dissemination becoming increasingly necessary for the public. The audience should understand what happens within the Universe at macrocosm and microcosm levels; they have to know *why* telescopes and microscopes are useful for the daily living. These might help in finding the answer of *how* we all can protect life and save the planet.

A failure or misuse of the dissemination process can have unpredictable consequences: irrecoverable measures taken at all levels, from social and political aspects to panic generated by the apocalyptic ads as it is the most recent regarding the end of the world in 2012.

Furthermore, the increasingly competition between Europe, USA, and some other countries such as China and Japan, raises the question of correct dissemination of scientific information worldwide.

The question is who has to be responsible for outreach? Scientists or science journalists? The correct answer (we think) is both, but in a good cooperation. The problem is not quite simple at all.

There is a fairly narrow category of scientists who want to engage in outreach; similarly, there is another equally restricted category of journalists interested in science and the correct dissemination of scientific information.

The first are too busy with their work and the need of having a highly appreciated CV prevent them from involving in education and outreach. On the other hand, journalists should have minimal scientific education and also be interested in making the best of their journalistic performance.

What is to do?

We believe that societies involved in various programs, such as EuroPlaNet, should address to high administrative institutions - EU, ministries of education and research - in order to request a direct participation in outreach. These forums should be informed that without a proper scientific dissemination, no additional funding it will be possible to attract. Society has to know how, why, and where the money were spent, otherwise it is almost impossible to understand that there is a need for money in doing research.

The slogan that opens the doors of big research laboratories was something like "Here are your money! Look where they are used! You want to further support the progress of science."

In Romania we had the response to the slogan: "These are research laboratories in which we work. This is what we can do, basically, with no money from the budget. Do you want to support us in ensuring the progress of science?"

Regarding journalists, things are equally complicated, and why don't say, seriously. Most of journalists are attracted to political or economical scandals. The percentage of those who want to be helped in practicing science journalism can be denoted by a single digit.

What is it to do? How can we determine media to support this type of journalism? By asking them to report on science, and asking big companies to invest in science writing. Sooner or later, the invested money will come back like a boomerang.

Society has to understand that with no science, and no technology we pave the road to an accelerated self destruction.

We are proposing to discuss in our paper and other aspects such as the role of scientists and science journalists and the collaboration between them. That means a quality outreach ultimately, in respect for the planet we are living on, and for the solar system which is the first laboratory for the study of the Universe. Also, for planet preservation and resuming promotion of science in Europe.