



Moving forward, looking back

Emma Weitkamp and Paola Rodari

Abstract

This issue sees the implementation of new designs for the JCOM website and articles and there are plans for further updates over the next year. In a recent survey, we have explored readers opinions of the journal with a view to introducing improvements. Your interests are diverse, which is not surprising for a field which ranges from books and print media, to museums and interactive technologies. We are also reviewing our peer review process to ensure that it meets the needs of our authors.

Over the coming year we have some exciting developments planned for JCOM. This issue sees the first of these, with a new design for JCOM website and articles and a space to publish news of interest for the international community - practitioners and researchers. Later in the year we have plans to update the platform for article submission. These planned changes are being informed by you, the readers and writers of JCOM, with input from our Editorial Advisory Board.

Over the past few months we have implemented a readership survey as well as a survey aimed at those who have submitted articles to JCOM over the past few years. These surveys were designed to help us understand how JCOM serves its community and what improvements we could implement to better meet readers' and authors' needs.

The readership survey attracted 103 responses, from science communication practitioners (40%), science communication researchers (51%), active scientists (24%) and other fields (11%). (Note that respondents could select multiple roles if appropriate.) Your interests span the range of topics covered by JCOM, though over 30% chose "public engagement with science and technology", "science communication: theory and models" and "science and the media" as one of their 5 preferred topics. Science education (28%), citizen science (27%), history of public communication of science (25%), informal learning (25%) and science centres and museums (25%) were also popular.

We are also considering how JCOM can support the science communication research and practice community beyond the papers we publish. We, therefore, asked readers what additional services would be of interest and it is clear that readers would value alerts about the publication of new surveys of public understanding of science and technology (e.g. Eurobarometer surveys), news regarding participatory projects at local, regional or national level and training courses, seminars and workshops. The news published in this issue is a first taste of

what we will offer. You can help ensure that the service is rich by notifying the journal of relevant publications, projects or other events that can help the international dimension of our community to become stronger.

Comments from readers also suggest interesting new avenues to explore. For example, we will consider how we can invite comment from other voices than those within our community as suggested by one respondent:

“Science is too serious a matter to be handled only by scientists. So, I think you should invite opinion makers (inside society, culture, sports, politics, economy, organisations, arts, schools) and citizens (why not?) to share their opinions about science and current issues, interests and concerns...”

Another respondent offers a similar view:

“Be more open to the dialogue with society and lay people. Give voice to the citizens (we have so much to learn...)”

Other readers asked for special attention to be given to developing countries, hosting reflections on the role of science communication in the development of societies and presenting case studies of participatory projects in those contexts.

Our survey of authors (44 responses from 289 requests to participate) also highlighted a number of issues for us to consider. Overwhelmingly responses were received from researchers in science communication and related fields (n=36: 82%). Respondents consider our review processes quick or very quick (n=19) with only 2 respondents reporting slow or very slow processing. Likewise, authors (of both accepted and rejected papers) generally believe that the quality of the peer review process is good or very good (n=26), with only 1 respondent rating it as poor. Likewise, respondents generally found the comments received from referees useful or very useful (n=25), with only 2 respondents finding the feedback of poor quality. Qualitative comments, though, suggest that our communication with authors is not always as clear as we hope; for example one respondent reported a paper apparently being accepted and then once revised the paper was in fact rejected. Clarity around the wording of responses to authors needs careful attention.

The feedback from authors highlights the important role that our reviewers play, both in ensuring the quality of the research papers published in JCOM and also in providing feedback to our authors. We would like to thank these committed individuals for their efforts on behalf of the journal, providing here the names of those who have reviewed papers for the journal in the past 3 years. I hope that we have not missed anyone from the list.

Ana Cristina Abad Restrepo
Marta Agostinho
Joachim Allgaier
Nick Allum
Carla Almeida

Ashley Anderson
Maria Ataide
José Manuel Azevedo
Annalee C. Babb
Ayelet Baram Tsabari
Miguel Barceló García
James Bell
Davide Bennato
Anne Bergmans
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Chiara Ceci
Tim Clark
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Patronella Grootens-Wiegers
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Andrew Moss
Ana Rosa Moreno
Marcos C.D. Neves
Ana Noronha
Fiachra O'Brolcháin
Sebastian Olenyi
Wayne Orchiston
Lindy Orthia
Kumar Patnam
Hans Peter Peters
Nico Pitrelli
Carmelo Polino
Donato Ramani
Jessica Ratcliff
Gema Revuelta
Paola Rodari
Luis Azevedo Rodrigues
Katherine E. Rowan
Margarida Sardo
Ryuma Shineha
Jousha Schimel
Elad Segev
Lloyd Spencer Davis
Erik Stengler
Robert Sternberg
Susan M. Stockmayer
Barbara Streicher
Giancarlo Sturloni
Keith S. Taber
Bruno Takahashi
Elisabetta Tola
Brian Trench
Ana María Vara
Victor Venema
Giuseppe A. Veltri
Dirk Vom Lehn
Emma Weitkamp
C.F. Rick Williams
Ronald A. Yaros

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