

Provisional Title: Science communication and public relations: beyond borders

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Abstract:

This chapter applies an overall communication constitute organizations (OCO) perspective to explore the relationships between science communication and public relations. In the context of increasing institutional interest in public relations and science communication, the chapter asks whether public relations from research institutions should be seen as a subset of science communication or a discrete role. It argues that communication is essential to the constitution of organizations and challenges ideas of science communication as value free and neutral. In doing so, it considers the rise of institutional public relations and considers how these 'new' players in science communication serve the interests of the scientific community. Finally, the chapter considers the implications of taking a COO perspective on how we understand the relationships between scientific organisations, scientists and the public.

Key Words: Public Relations, Science Communication, Organizational Communication

1. Introduction

Many science communicators may not [...] recognise their role in public relations. However, they are in the business of building relationships through communication and they are the guardians and promoters of their organisations' reputations. That, in my opinion, all makes them far more complete public relations practitioners than some who use the title but who only carry out basic publicity functions - Sue Waterhouse, CIPR President, 2014¹

For more than a century news media have been the central arena where people learned about new developments in science, making news media a natural habitat for communication about and with science. This context provides good reasons for science communication scholars to focus attention on media and over the years, research has shed plenty of light on

¹ From 'Science Public Relations and Communication: Summary of key findings' (2014), Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available from: http://www.cipr.co.uk/files/cipr/auk/files/SCIENCECIPR_KEYFINDINGS.pdf (Accessed 24 January 2016).