

IYA2009 Communication Guidelines for SPoCs

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Introduction

As the IYA2009 draws closer and the preparation of activities and the search for support becomes more urgent, the IYA2009 Secretariat prepared a few guidelines which will hopefully help you promote and get support for your IYA2009 national activities.

No matter how good you are at organising activities and events, and how many brilliant and original ideas you have, if you can't make your activities visible, you might as well not do them. The IYA2009 is an international communication and education event. One of your major tasks is to get the IYA2009 "out there", to as many people as possible.

These are just some simple guidelines with generic tips that you can then adapt to your own needs.

Visibility

You want people to know about the IYA2009 and your national activities. The more people know about your activities, the more likely they will be a success. The more people know about your events, the more people will attend, the more journalists will write about them and the easier it is to get support for your future activities.

To get visibility for your activities and events, try to use all the resources that you have available. And always remember: you have to plan ahead!

National Website

"If it is not on the web, it doesn't exist". Your website is the front line of all your activities, the place where everyone goes to get information.

- If you do not have a dedicated website yet, we have only one advice for you: get one as soon as possible!
- If your IYA2009 website is online already, then we have several advices:
 - Make sure it is updated frequently. If you don't have enough national material to update it, use international news or the Secretariat's updates.
 - Use it to store all the files and materials that you will eventually need to show/give other people: logos, trailers, press releases, contacts, calendar of events, etc. That way, people can be directed to it, saving you and your team a lot of time.
 - Make sure the emails received via your website are read and answered. A "ghost" email address, one that no one really checks for new messages, is very bad for your image.
 - Broken links are bad for your image too.
 - Check your website for any incorrect information.

Media Partners

The media will be a key factor in the visibility and acknowledgment of your activities. They will be your best chance at getting both at your peers and at the general public. Use them!

Although some media are more important than others at a national level, all media in your country are important to your mission:

- Build a database of as many media as you can, local, regional and national
- All types of media are important: newspapers, magazines (science and generic), TV stations, websites, blogs, etc.
- Look for contacts within those media and establish a connection.
- Offer the media a partnership with the IYA2009. This partnership may take many forms and they should be discussed on a case by case basis. As a foundation, media partners can provide coverage and publicity for the IYA2009 activities in your country. For example, a media partner can contribute with a combination of the following:
 - Free publicity for the events or specific campaigns
 - Inserts
 - Feature articles
 - News stories
 - Distributing a CD version of IYA2009 promotion material with media
 - Placing a link to the IYA2009 national website on an online version of media
 - Placing a link to an IYA2009 specific activity's website

You should be able to give something in return for this help, namely make the partner's logo visible on all you communication products. You can and should negotiate other forms of benefits that you can offer.

Networks, networks, networks

Make use of all networks available to you to communicate about your activities. Apart from those networks that are more obvious to you and that you are using (universities, research institutes, amateur astronomers), there are surely many people working in science and scientific and cultural communication in your country. Use their contacts, use their networks for the benefit of the IYA2009. You probably know who these people are much better than we do, but here are some examples:

- Science centres
- Public libraries
- Science clubs at schools
- Teachers associations
- Science journalists
- Science communicators
- Science teachers
- Etc...

Get in touch with the other SPoCs from other nations, share experiences, ask for or give advice. At this point you are probably facing some problems with the planning and organisation of your activities. Maybe a SPoC of another country has had that problem before and found a brilliant way to solve it. You never know, ask around. Use the IYA2009 Discussion Forum or just email other SPoCs, especially those who share your language.

Resources

Use the resources produced by the Secretariat and translated them to your language. We made them for you. At this point we can already use some useful resources, but we will do our best to produce some more before and during 2009:

- IYA2009 trailer: if you did not request a version in your language, you can still make it yourself by using the "no text version" especially prepared to that effect and add the text with almost any video editing software.

- IYA2009 Official Brochure
- Power Point Presentations: “*The International Year of astronomy 2009*”, “*What is astronomy?*” and “*Who actually invented the astronomical telescope?*”
- IYA2009 Logo and Branding
- IYA2009 Poster
- IYA2009 Partnership Opportunities Document: this was prepared for sponsorship for the global activities, but you can adjust it to your own needs
- Resource Guides, courtesy of Andrew Fraknoi (Foothill College & the Astronomical Society of the Pacific)
- CAPjournal: the Communication Astronomy with the Public journal
- Other resources

Press releases

You must always bear in mind that if you want the media to talk about your activities, you have to somehow facilitate that to them. A good way to do that is by sending out a press release.

“A press release is a précis of a news item designed to communicate the essence of a story, making it obvious that it is news. Every item, no matter how short, should answer the six golden questions: What? When? Where? Who? Why? and How? Try to make your press release simple, with one key message. Start with the most important point. Press releases are not aimed at scientists and therefore clarity should prevail over absolute scientific rigour.”

In, *The Hands-on Guide for Science Communicators*, Lars Lindberg Christensen, 2007

If you have an exhibition, conference, talk, star party or another event you consider important enough for the journalists to be interested in, take some time and send them a press release some time in advance. Remember: journalists need time to prepare, don't send your press release on the day or the event! If you think your event is not interesting enough, make it so! Invite someone famous to attend and speak, for example.

Always keep an updated data base with contacts of journalists and follow up on your press releases with a phone call or an email, whenever possible.

Go commercial!

By now, you must have realised that the most difficult part about organising the IYA2009 events and activities is finding a way to finance them. There are no easy solutions for this, but there are some tips that might help.

The most important one is: go commercial! Try to sell the IYA2009 brand to possible sponsors as an attractive product, an event that will reach millions of people, of all ages, all around the country. There are companies who are willing to pay a lot of money for that kind of visibility.

Then, make a table of benefits you can offer prospective sponsors. Think carefully about the activities and products you have planned and think of ways in which you can link possible sponsors' names, logos or products to it. Make your table as detailed as possible and updated it, according to the developments on the planning of your activities. As an example, you can see the IYA2009 Partnership Opportunities document prepared for the IYA2009 Secretariat and that is being used for global fundraising worldwide. Please find it on the IYA2009 website at:

http://www.astronomy2009.org/files/reports/IYA2009_Partnership_Opportunities_%20Version_5.pdf

Further reading

European Commission: European Research - A guide to successful communications:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/cer2004/pdf/rtd_2004_guide_success_communication.pdf

NASW Communicating Science News:

<http://www.nasw.org/resource/pios/csn/>

NSERC Communicating Science to the Public: A Handbook for Researchers:

<http://www.nserc.ca/seng/how1en.htm>

A Hands-on Guide for Science Communicators (by Lars Lindberg Christensen):

<http://www.springer.com/east/home/astronomy/popular+astronomy+?SGWID=5-40152-22-72042403-0>

Sample: <http://www.eso.org/~lchrste/scicomm/sampler.pdf>

BBRSC Communicating with the public guidance notes:

<http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/cwtp.pdf>

NERCs Communicating your ideas:

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/publications/guidance/documents/comyourideas.pdf>

ESRC

- Developing a media strategy :
<http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/media.pdf>
- Television and radio:
<http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/tv.pdf>
- Influencing the UK policymaking process:
<http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/influencing.pdf>
- Heroes of dissemination:
<http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/heroes.pdf>

Going public: an introduction to communicating science, engineering and technology, by

Michael Kenward : http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/g_public.pdf

The Royal Society Scientists and the media:

<http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/repository/guides/document-105.pdf>

Communicating Astronomy with the Public Conference Proceedings:

- CAP2005: <http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/cap2005/proceedings.html>
- CAP2007: <http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/cap2007/proceedings.html>
- Links: <http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/links/index.html>

Science communication in the United Kingdom

http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Topic:Science_Communication_in_the_UK

Europlanet – Communicating a Cosmic Vision, developing and effective outreach strategy:

http://www.europlanet-eu.org/images/stories/eprn_cv.pdf

Final remarks

We hope these guidelines help you tackle with some of the problems you are facing now. Here at the Secretariat, we will continue to work on ways to assist you in your difficult, but rewarding, task of making the International Year of Astronomy 2009 a huge success in your country.

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