Choosing “Yes” over “No” By Rachel Wu

One of the best pieces of advice I have ever gotten is: “When you get the choice either to do something or not, choose to do it.” This advice is also portrayed in the movie, Yes Man, where Jim Carrey is only allowed to say “Yes” to requests. Over the years, this piece of advice has made all the difference in every aspect of my work and personal life. In Pittsburgh during my undergraduate years, I chose to answer an ad for a band looking for a violinist. The band eventually led me to a PhD in London while playing on stage for 7 years. Sure, I have turned down a lot of opportunities due to time restrictions or differences in opinion. However, saying “yes” to more opportunities than normal has allowed me to expand my horizons, meet key figures in my life, and learn from experiences I otherwise would not even have encountered.

Opening up to many different opportunities may give the impression of stumbling around or losing focus. However, only after going through particular experiences can we connect the dots later to see how previous experiences are invaluable. This connection happens on both macro levels (between fields) and micro levels (within fields). In his Stanford commencement speech, Steve Jobs talked about taking calligraphy classes (which at first did not seem to have any practical applications) after dropping out of college. Ten years later, when designing the first Macintosh computer, these classes made his work unique. In my experience, learning how to perform on stage for so many years has made me more comfortable giving academic talks now. This is just one of many personal examples of how seemingly unrelated fields influence each other in unexpected but useful ways.

On the micro level (within a field), early career academics require professional development. The PDA at U of R offers many unique opportunities for postdocs to practice fundamental skills, such as presenting your work and meeting each other, which may lead to learning new perspectives or even to new collaborations. While some may think that they do not have time for the activities offered by the PDA, these activities are invaluable for professional development. For me, the PDA activities have allowed me to connect with great PhD students, postdocs, and professors (forming a useful support network), to present my work to a diverse audience, and to engage in interesting discussions impacting my current research.

Saying “yes” to more opportunities has never disappointed me. At the very least, it always leads to a useful learning experience.

Rachel Wu is the co-chair of the PDA, and a postdoctoral research associate at the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences. She can be contacted at rwu@bcs.rochester.edu

Why join a UR PDA Committee?
♦ Be involved at U of R beyond conducting scientific research.
♦ Improve your networking by interacting and collaborating with peers, top-level scientists, and university administrators.
♦ Build your management, leadership, and communications skills—a selling point for your next job search.
♦ Learn about planning and organizing meetings, seminars and other events of your interests while educating other postdocs.

How much time does it take? We realize as a postdoc your time is valuable. The executive committee meets only once a month for an hour. Otherwise, any additional time commitment is completely your decision.
Every third week in September, U of R celebrates National Postdoc Appreciation week with special colloquia and a poster competition with raffles and prizes.
5 Simple Tips for Communicating Science
By Maddalena Bearzi (Originally published online for National Geographic)

More than ever, scientists are called upon to provide assessments, often to non-scientists, on which management policies are built. Because of their scientific knowledge, experts should consider becoming more involved and effective in raising public awareness, as an educated citizenry might better shape the direction of political and policy decisions. How scientists communicate this information may have measurable conservation impacts on the future of our planet.

So, what should scientists do to change the status quo and help make complex scientific concepts accessible (and readable) to a non-technical public? I believe there are many interesting and innovative ways of communicating complicated concepts using diverse media, from popular science books to public talks, from twitter and Facebook to newspapers and documentaries.

Here are a few basic rules I've come up with that can be applied to both writing or speaking, to assure we are all talking the same language. This, I hope, will help promote a better understanding of issues, thereby stimulating wise and timely action to save what belongs to us all.

1. Be Simple and Straightforward
Many of the concepts scientists deal with on a daily basis are difficult to understand without technical training yet these same concepts are often the basis of policies that affect the population at large. It would, therefore, be helpful if scientists tried harder to find ways of communicating complex things in lay terms.

Following some of the great and successful science communicators in one’s own field of expertise or, for that matter, other fields as well, and learning from them can help to improve both writing and speaking skills. Some notable greats are Albert Einstein, Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking, Richard Feynman, Paul Ehrlich, and Stephen Schneider to name a few.

Another idea is to partner up with a “human translator”, meaning someone working in an informal science institution such as an aquarium or a museum. These less formal science educators are more accustomed to dealing with the general public and might work as a bridge between a scientist and a layperson by helping to make hard concepts more digestible.

“Analogy” is yet another powerful tool when one needs to explain something complex. If we stop and think for a moment, many grueling scientific concepts can be clarified through the use of an analogy. Good teachers use analogies all the time to build “conceptual bridges” for students in need to visualize things like an atom or an ecosystem.

As Einstein said: “Most of the fundamental ideas of science are essentially simple, and may, as a rule, be expressed in a language comprehensible to everyone.” Scientists should always try to keep this in mind!

2. Don’t Be Condescending… or Pedantic
Scientists should assume that their readers or viewers are as smart and curious as they are. The public just doesn’t know what a scientist knows. We scientists are there to “translate” to the public. Without question, experts and general audiences have different communication styles. So scientists need to know what they want to say and then say it clearly and concisely… without putting readers or viewers to sleep!

A popular science writer or a public speaker must be something of an entertainer. Scientists need to stick to the point and make it entertaining without meandering with incomprehensible terms, hard to grasp formulas and graphs! And remember that what we scientists think is entertaining might not be. If you’re writing a speech or an article for a newspaper, give it to other people (not scientists) to read and watch carefully to see whether their eyes are glassing over as they read. If so, it’s time for a re-write!

3. Tell Compelling Stories
Possibly based on your own experiences, so you can make a connection with the readers or an audience. We scientists often deal with really “cool stuff” and compelling stories but we barely notice them because we are hard-wired into our science. For instance, in one of my books, I recount a story of a school of dolphins that, by leading our research boat offshore, enabled my research crew and I to save a young girl from drowning. That story opened the possibility to engage readers not only in the story itself but also served as an excellent introduction into more complex and seemingly unrelated subjects like brain and social complexity.

Please visit the online versions of our newsletters @

www.rochester.edu/gradstudies/pda/newsletter.html

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5 Simple Tips for Communicating Science...Continued from page 3

True stories can easily be written more like “fiction” to gain some popular appeal. Science writers can learn a lot from fiction writers! The title of my last book, *Dolphin Confidential: Confessions of a Field Biologist*, is kind of a fictional title for a science book. In the book, I talk about my life with dolphins and other creatures, but I also talk about my personal life. Scientists shouldn’t be afraid to talk about things personally because personal stories are better for making a connection with the public. After all, being social and curious creatures as we are, we all love some good gossip once in a while.

Obviously, one can’t always be cute and tell appealing stories. Sometimes, as scientists concerned about the future of our Planet, we need to communicate things that are not so sexy to make people aware of important issues. For instance, I wrote (and talked) about dolphins suffering from skin lesions and physical deformities because of our human impact. Now, how does one engross a reader or a viewer in dolphins with bad skin and humps? Possibly by incorporating the “ugly” details as a sort of sub-plot within engaging stories taken from one’s own experiences.

4. (When and if you can) Use Illustrations

Basically, “visualize science.” Don’t use graphs and tables if you can possibly avoid it and, even better, restrain yourself from using text in a PowerPoint presentation. There is nothing worse than looking at a speaker talking while twenty sentences appear on a blue screen. Engage your audience with exciting images and, why not, a few cartoon strips to lighten up your talk and make the public laugh instead of looking for a pillow.

5. Be Apolitical

The goal of a scientist—as either writer or speaker—is to be accessible to everyone regardless of whether the audience is Democrat or Republican, religious or atheist. Now, more than ever, we need to recognize these gaps in our society by writing or speaking in a way that bridges them.

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This article was edited for space. For the full piece, go to: newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/11/5-simple-tips-for-communicating-science/

Dr. Maddalena Bearzi is a marine biologist, blogger and co-founder of the Ocean Conservation Society. She can be contacted at mbearzi@oceanconservation.org

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Media Coaching Tips
By Peter Iglinski

Preparing for the Live or Taped Interview:
- Be concise.
- Be clear of the reason for the interview.
- Craft your message beforehand and come up with examples that illustrate your point.
- Anticipate the questions, including the unwelcome ones.
- Practice your responses—several times and out loud.
- It’s OK to delay the interview in order to prepare. A reporter’s deadline is not necessarily yours.
- Solid colors tend to look best on TV. Remember you will be under bright lights, so it may be necessary to apply foundation or cosmetics.
- Practice with a colleague, supervisor or press officer.

Interview Tips:
- Be concise.
- Answer the questions directly. Vague responses allow for misinterpretations.
- Avoid one-word answers, such as yes or no.
- Answer in complete sentences.
- Elaborate, don’t digress.
- Avoid being too casual or familiar with the interviewer. (e.g. Don’t use the reporter’s first name.)
- In the case of weak or inappropriate questions, politely redirect the topic to something suitable.
- Stop talking when you are finished, even if the reporter waits for more—otherwise you may say something you didn’t intend.
- Avoid any temptation to improvise. If you don’t know the answer, promise to contact the reporter later with the relevant information.
- Look for opportunities to illustrate your points.
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera, when responding. If the interview is being conducted remotely without someone present to ask the questions, then do look at the camera.
- Do not use acronyms or technical jargon.
- Be patient. The reporter may be working outside his/her area of expertise.

Peter Iglinski is the Press Officer for Science and Public Media in the University of Rochester-River Campus Office of University Communications. He can be contacted at Peter.Iglinski@rochester.edu
Job Hunting Tips

By Wendy Wicks

During National Postdoc Appreciations, Wendy Wicks gave a workshop on developing an outstanding, or rather a stand-out, curriculum vitae, as well as other job hunting advice.

**The CV**

- **Use Keywords**
  Select a few keywords or phrases to describe your professional interests and list them beneath your personal information.

- **Education**
  Include your degrees, research interests, dissertation title, advisor’s name and committee members—you never know when a connection resonates with the hiring manager.

- **Short Biography and Professional Summary**
  A paragraph each is a natural way to present your interests and personal brand, moreover it leverages your background and reinforces your status in the your field.

- **Experience**
  Educate the reader. Bullet your results and positive impact on the organization.

- **Core Competencies**
  List your computer skills, technical expertise, lingual skills, grant writing skills, and any other skills which may uniquely qualify you.

- **Customize**
  Always customize your CV for the job you are applying for. Start with a CV that has everything you can imagine in it, then refine it to fit your needs. Chronology is not always essential, try re-ordering items according to significance.

**Cover Letters**

- If possible send a cover letter and CV for the position’s hiring manager, not just human resources, as he or she is more inclined to know what he or she is looking for.

- Research the Organization’s strengths and weaknesses.

- Prove your value by stating examples from your experience which complement the responsibilities of the position.

**Reference Letters**

- Choose writers you can trust, the vibe must be perfect.

- Thank your references and keep everyone in the loop of your job search.

**Following the Interview**

- Send same day personalized Thank You note (avoid campus mail).

- Reinforce that you are the ideal fit.

- Call your network with an update, and thank them.

**Social Networking**

- Do your best to protect you brand (i.e., your name and identity).
  ◊ Don’t connect with colleagues on Facebook.
  ◊ Do connect with colleagues on LinkedIn, and update regularly.
  ◊ Do blog about your work activities and interests.
  ◊ Don’t over share about your personal life, colleagues or politics.

Wendy Wicks is the founder and president of The Resume Works of Pittsford. She has nearly 40 years of resume consulting experience.

She can be contacted at wwick323@gmail.com
The LinkedIn Portfolio
By J. Bianca Jackson

LinkedIn is one of those social/professional networking sites which often make exaggerated claims about how it can impact one’s career. The idea of a scientist opening his or her inbox with a job offer based on a digital resume and some friendly endorsements not only sounds absurd, it sounds risky. So, does LinkedIn really have a value that goes beyond finding friends of friends in one’s field to friend or chatting on boards about the latest professional controversy? Well, as of this summer, LinkedIn has finally provided a service that has little to bringing more users into the fold, and more to do with helping current users promote themselves and show that they are legit.

That easily fabricatable digital CV can now be expanded to a digital portfolio. It is like having a professional website, without the worries about web design, and all the advantage of automatically updating friends and colleagues of new content. Every time you publish a new journal article you can attach it to your CV. That poster you spent hours designing is no longer exclusive to conference attendees and lab visitors. Did you give a talk or perform some outreach that happened to get recorded? Now you can post video. You can even post links to other websites or blogs written on or by you, including those researcher websites that calculate things like your H-Index factor. You can post everything in your Executive Summary, or you can organize your portfolio according to position and chronology.

While science employers are not really scouring LinkedIn looking for potential hires, HR and search committees will Google you to find out more about you. With LinkedIn often appearing at the top of the results list, having a LinkedIn portfolio will save future employers time researching you, and you will be able to put your best work forward.

J. Bianca Jackson is a postdoctoral research associate at the Institute of Optics.
She can be contacted at jbiancajackson@rochester.edu

For the second year in a row, the National Postdoc Association (NPA) has launched the Every Member Campaign. Join NPA members and friends across the country in supporting the postdoctoral community.
Every gift and every voice counts!
https://npamembers.site-ym.com/donations/
Getting to Know...Dr. Heinzelman By Kamil Alzayday

How long have you been working at the UR?
I began as an Assistant Professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department in January of 2001.

Did you always want to be a scientist or did you aspire to do something else?
I always enjoyed math and physics. My father is an engineer who worked on voice recognition systems at Bell Labs, and he always seemed to really enjoy working on these types of problems. So that inspired me to consider engineering as a potential career. But I also enjoyed teaching, as a tutor in high school and as a facilitator in some workshops in college. My mother was a science and math teacher, and I grew up recognizing the incredible impact that teachers can have on their students. So that led me to my career choice, combining engineering and teaching!

What appointments do you currently hold? Can you share a bit about your various roles?
I am a Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and I hold a secondary appointment in the Department of Computer Science. I am also the Dean of Graduate Studies for Arts, Sciences and Engineering. In my professor role, there are several aspects to what I do on a daily basis: I teach a senior level/graduate course on Wireless Communications and Networking; I work on various projects with my graduate and undergraduate students (current projects range from new approaches to passive wake-up radios for wireless sensor networks to distributed computing using spare cycles on users’ smart phones to emotion classification based on voice); I participate in departmental and university activities; and I am involved in my professional community as an associate editor for several journals and on the organizing committees and technical program committees for numerous conferences. I also am the co-founder and current co-leader for a group called N^2Women (Networking Networking Women), a discipline-specific community for researchers in the communications and networking research fields.

In my Dean role, I support the AS&E post-docs, PhD and Master’s students through creating professional development opportunities; developing policies and procedures; reviewing issues that arise and solving problems that are keeping students from meeting their goals; approving dissertations; and working with program directors to support the programs.

What do you feel is one of your greatest accomplishments?
The successes of my students, both my own personal graduate students as well as those throughout AS&E that I have been privileged to work with through my role as Dean, have certainly been my greatest accomplishments, and have provided me the most satisfaction.

What is the most important quality for a mentor?
I think the most important thing about a mentor is the quality of the relationship. A good mentor is someone you feel comfortable with, someone with whom you can speak openly about issues, career development, pretty much anything for which you need advice.

What is the best way to keep competitive edge?
Attending conferences, learning about the latest research and networking with others in your community, is a great way to stay on top of your field.

How do you motivate yourselves/others?
I’m not sure you can really motivate others—motivation really needs to come from within. What I can do is try to show students the benefit of their work, the importance of what they are doing, and their ability to accomplish their goals.

What are your views of postdoc experience at the UofR?
I have worked with a few post-docs during my career, and it has always been a very rewarding experience. I view my post-docs as faculty-in-training, providing them with a chance to further their research goals, obtain mentoring experience, become involved in a range of projects, participate in writing grants for funding, and take advantage of the professional development opportunities available to graduate students and post-docs.

What do you consider to be some myths of

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Share your experience, story, interesting book review, poetry, letters to editor, international column, recipes, jokes, cartoons, drawings, and other informative resources with your fellow postdocs. Email: Kamil_Alzayady@urmc.rochester.edu or postdocs_urmc@gmail.com

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academia and how does one let go and embrace the exciting, inspiring, and deeply satisfying academic job?

You work hard in academia, that is not a myth! However, there are many wonderful benefits of academia. There are so few positions where you can really set your own agenda, and where you can continuously learn new things and move in new directions as your interests (and the interests of your students) change. Also, I’ve found academia to be a job where I can achieve work-life balance, as I can set my own schedule.

What are some obstacles faced by postdocs in times of tight NIH budget?

Finding academic positions has definitely become harder, and once you land a position, starting up a research program, given tight budgets, requires a level of perseverance that is unprecedented. That is why I think it is important to develop back-up plans and multiple paths for achieving career goals; and to diversify one’s interests and funding sources as much as possible when trying to set up and maintain a research program.

Beyond experimentation and scientific writing, what qualities/skills are necessary for success in academia? And why?

I really think that good communication skills are essential to success in academia. Much of what we do is about sharing—whether that be sharing our research results with others or sharing our knowledge of a field in the classroom. Without the ability to communicate well to a range of audiences, I think one’s impact cannot be as strong.

What advice would you give to yourselves 10 years ago?

Enjoy the different stages of your career, as things change and evolve over time.

What are your three greatest passions?

My family, sailing, and traveling around the world.

Who is your personal hero?

My parents.

What would be your first choice for a new career?

Not really sure about this—I think being a professor is the best career one can have!

Dr. Wendy Heinzelman is the Dean of Graduate Studies and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. She can be contacted at Wendi.Heinzelman@rochester.edu
UR Postdoc Accomplishments Summer/Fall 2013

KAMIL J. ALZAYADY
Department of pharmacology and Physiology
Publications

Conferences
◊ Calcium Signaling Gordon Research Seminar, Tuscany Il Ciocco Resort, Lucca (Barga), Italy, June 2013.

SHEILA N. BELLO-IRIZARRY
Center for Musculoskeletal Research
Publications

Awards
◊ 2nd prize Poster Presentation Travel Award at The University of Rochester’s National Postdoc Appreciation Week, September 2013.

SONIA D’SILVA
Center for Vaccine Biology and Immunology
Awards
◊ First prize at the Poster competition held during the Postdoc Appreciation week, 2014, at the University of Rochester for the poster "Multiplexed Immunoassays for Pneumococcal Polysaccharide (PnPs) vaccine Evaluation."

BENJAMIN J. FRISCH
Department of Medicine
Awards
◊ Gregory R. Mundy Fellowship award from the International Bone and Mineral Society

DEAN JOHNSON
Department of Biomedical Engineering
Publications

ISAAC SUNDAR
Department of Environmental Medicine
Publications
◊ Hwang JW*, Sundar IK*, et al. Circadian clock function is disrupted by environmental tobacco/cigarette smoke, leading to lung inflammation and injury via a SIRT1-BMAL1 pathway, FASEB J.
◊ Sundar IK, Yao H, Rahman I. Oxidative stress and chromatin remodeling in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and smoking-related diseases, Antioxid Redox Signal.

KANNIKA VATS
Department of Biomedical Engineering
Publications

LAN WEI
Department of Pharmacology and Physiology
Publications

LULU XIE
Center for Translational Neuromedicine
Publications
◊ L. Xie , et al., Sleep Drives Metabolite Clearance from the Adult Brain, Science.

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- Attention
- Perception
- Music cognition
- Concept and category formation
- Decision-making
- Statistical learning
- & more.

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URMC GEPA: Office of Graduate Education and Postdoc Affairs

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