

Beyond Media Relations: Towards New Horizons in Science Communication

- a seminar for science communication professionals with Professor Alexander Gerber

Date: Friday 19 February 2016
Time: 10:30 – 15:30 (light lunch included)
Presenter: Prof Alexander Gerber, Rhine-Waal University, Germany
Cost: R750 per delegate
Venue: CREST, 5th floor of RW Wilcocks Building (Room 4043)
c/o Ryneveld and Victoria streets, Stellenbosch
Public parking nearby at Eikestad Mall



About the seminar

Is the communication of science maybe too much restricted to be an institutional loud-speaker or translator for the lay public? Media relations and marketing, according to our guest speaker, only make up a fraction of today's responsibilities and opportunities of a communication manager for science and innovation.

"The expectations and skill sets of a professional science communicator today resemble the classical role of the 1990s as much as a smartphone resemble a cell phone from that time," says Alexander Gerber, professor of science communication in Germany. "Both share the most basic features and functions, but the original core function to make a phone call has moved so far into the background that some young people don't even know any more how to make a call which is not a Skype or Periscope, WhatsApp or Tweet. Additionally it would be more than naïve and rather irresponsible to misconceive science as apolitical or as holding some kind of a monopoly of truth."

Adapting our self-perception and skill sets to the new communication environments and to the changed socio-political realities will be the agenda of this seminar. We will reconsider the priorities of science communication practice in the context of stakeholder theory and on the basis of sociological reflections upon to the role of science in modern society. Besides an introduction to new tools and practices, we will also look at the challenge of evaluating the impact if not the very outcomes of our work.

About the presenter

Alexander Gerber is a professor of science communication at Rhine-Waal University in northwestern Germany, with extensive experience in both scholarship and practice. He is the research director of the extramural Institute for Science and Innovation Communication and serves as visiting professor to the Berlin Institute of Technology and the Institute for Advanced Studies in Trieste, Italy. An information scientist by training he has also worked as a science journalist, author and film director, and as head of marketing & communications at Fraunhofer ICT Group. Among the research projects he coordinates at the moment, there is a global endeavour to investigate and transform communication governance in science, a project which also includes partners from South Africa. Other research projects focus on science education and innovative interactive media. Prof Gerber is a member of the governing board of EuroScience and the supervisory board of Europe's largest general science conference ESOF (Euro-Science Open Forum). He serves as member of the advisory board to the International Science in Society Knowledge Community, and as chair of the advisory board of the German Association of Specialised Journalists.

The morning part of our workshop will mostly include presentations by Prof Gerber, each followed by rounds of discussions. The afternoon session will give participants the opportunity to ask in-depth questions on whatever topics they consider most relevant to their work practice.

How to register: Complete the registration form on the next page and submit to Rolene Langford via Email rlm@sun.ac.za by 15 February 2016. Places are limited and will be allocated as payment is received.

This seminar forms part of the "Science Fridays @Stellenbosch" series hosted by the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University.



South African Research Chair
in Science Communication