



OUR GOALS

INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Science touches everyone's life, either directly or indirectly; therefore everyone should have at least a rudimentary understanding of the scientific enterprise and how it works. AAAS tells the "science behind the story," to help people appreciate how their lives intersect with science in obvious ways and how important discoveries actually come about. In this way, the impact of science and innovation on events of major importance can be given their proper due.

TO INCREASE THE PUBLIC'S UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AAAS WORKS TO:

Develop Tools to Improve Communication of Science

AAAS organizes press briefings, provides in-depth analyses of complex issues, and provides educational content for the Internet, for television and for radio programs. Every week, AAAS emails a pre-approved group of more than 3,400 journalists details about the research to be published in the next issue of *Science*. Science writers can also sign up for access to EurekAlert!, a AAAS website that provides embargoed and other breaking news from research institutions worldwide.

Enhance Communication Skills of Scientists and Engineers

AAAS helps scientists and engineers become highly effective in communicating to the public the complex principles that underlie their work. When scientists are properly trained, their stories quickly capture the public imagination.

Form Partnerships to Improve Public Understanding

AAAS enters into partnerships with other international, national, regional, and local organizations to provide science and technology programs for all age groups. AAAS teams up with these groups to develop local and national science programs, as well as to create resources for print and broadcast media and to provide guidance on the quality of resources for information on science and technology.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

The activities described below are among the AAAS initiatives that demonstrate the Association's commitment to increase public understanding and appreciation of science and technology:

Scientists and Engineers as Journalists

Ann Celi is a medicine/pediatrics physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA. She is in practice at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates in Boston, where she is conducting a study on the factors that influence women to breastfeed their babies. She is also one of more than 400 scientists and engineers who are alumni of AAAS's Mass Media Fellowship program.

Every summer about 25 young scientists and engineers are sent to work for newspapers and magazines and for radio and television programs across the country. The purpose of the 28-year-old program is to further public understanding and appreciation of science and technology.

Celi's 10-week internship at Wisconsin's *Milwaukee Journal* in 1992 taught her to explain scientific concepts carefully to journalists, a lesson she draws on when talking publicly about breastfeeding.

"To get substance into a (newspaper) article, you have to make information clear and succinct," Cecil says. "If you don't, that will be the first thing the copy editor takes out."

Training in Radio and Science Writing for South Africans

In much of rural Africa, radio is the major means of communicating news and other information. So, radio science journalism is what AAAS staff members are teaching a group of South African journalists and scientists in a three-year program that began in 2001.

With support from the South African Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology (DACST), the DACST-AAAS Science Radio Journalism Fellows Project, is attempting to attract applicants outside the cosmopolitan Johannesburg/Pretoria area. To apply, they must be fluent in an indigenous language.

In August 2001, the first South Africans in the program said they had come to the United States to learn; but the visitors may have taught their hosts something as well.

"If I write a science story, I have to do it in a way that takes into account indigenous knowledge systems," says Madumane Matloa, 27, a science and technology radio producer for the South African Broadcasting Company. "We have to show that we do not disrespect the ways of our people."

Daily Radio Spots Answer Questions, Feature Research

Since 1988, more than 2,800 of AAAS's radio shows have run on commercial radio programs across the United States. The 90-second features tell the public about the latest research in science and technology, explaining topics such as the Human Genome Project and the origin of the universe in language that is clear, lively, and free of jargon.

One 2001 spot, for example, features a scientist at the University of Southern California, who studies the timing and impact of earthquakes by digging trenches across faults and examining sediment for evidence of activity.

"To many people, (the trench) looks like a hole in the ground, but to me it's a physics experiment," says James Dolan of the University of Southern California in an interview for Science Update. "To me, it's a window into the past that allows us to see how earthquakes in the past have interacted with one another."