



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2008

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PRIMING SCIENTISTS FOR SUCCESSFUL MEDIA INTERVIEWS
New AIBS book provides tools and tips for effective science communication

WASHINGTON, DC—Evolution, climate change, stem cell research—Scientists are frequently called upon to provide expert information on hot button issues that pervade the daily news headlines, yet most find themselves woefully unprepared for the bright lights of the television studio or leading questions from a newspaper journalist. A new publication from the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*, by Holly Menninger and Robert Gropp, will prepare scientists for successful and effective media interviews.

Recognizing that many scientists are reluctant to engage in media outreach, the *Primer* outlines compelling reasons for scientists to interact with the media and describes key differences between journalism and science that may not be apparent to practicing scientists. Step-by-step, Menninger and Gropp walk scientists through the entire interview process—from appropriate questions to ask when a reporter calls to practical advice for looking and sounding one’s best on-air or on-camera.

The information and advice in the *Primer* is presented in eight easy-to-read chapters that provide vital information for scientists new to media outreach, as well as a quick refresher for seasoned experts—an ideal text for a graduate course on science communication or a professional development course for students and faculty. The *Primer*’s authors speak from their own experiences as PhD scientists in the biological sciences with years of experience in media outreach.

The concise, user-friendly volume has several unique features that set it apart from other media guides for scientists. The *Primer* includes first-person interviews with nearly a dozen scientists who have successfully navigated print, radio, and television interviews. The scientists—including the “Island Snake Lady,” Kristin Stanford, recently featured on the Discovery Channel show, *Dirty Jobs*—share advice and experiences on a number of topics, including safely speaking on behalf of an organization, avoiding trouble when discussing socially or politically controversial topics, and reflections on first interviews.

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The *Primer* also provides worksheets to assist readers with interview preparation: building a message framework with talking points and transition phrases, developing analogies, and using illustrative props or images. It includes pages for readers to organize contact information of journalists with whom they have worked directly and those who have reported on stories related to their own research to keep as potential contacts for future story pitches.

Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media is available now at www.aibs.org/bookstore/

The table of contents and cover image are also available at www.aibs.org/bookstore/

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Holly Menninger is a public policy associate at the American Institute of Biological Sciences, where she works on science policy and to improve communication among scientists, policymakers, and the general public. She has a PhD in behavior, ecology, evolution, and systematics from the University of Maryland. Before joining AIBS, Menninger frequently fielded entomological questions from journalists representing local, national, and international media outlets. She now writes regularly for the AIBS Public Policy Report, the Washington Watch column in *BioScience*, and on the blog of the Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science.

Robert Gropp is the director of public policy at AIBS, where he has led the effort to increase AIBS media relations and activities to better articulate and communicate public policy positions to and through the media. He earned a PhD in botany from the University of Oklahoma. With over 10 years in public affairs, Gropp has worked with many media outlets ranging from trade publications to national newspapers. He also edits the Washington Watch column in *BioScience* as well as the AIBS Public Policy Report and Natural Science Collections Alliance Washington Report.

BOOK SUMMARY

Title: *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*

Authors: Holly Menninger and Robert Gropp

Publisher: American Institute of Biological Sciences

ISBN: 978-0-936829-03-6

5.5x7.5 paperback, 54pp., \$12.95

ABOUT AIBS

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) scientific association dedicated to advancing biological research and education for the welfare of society. Founded in 1947 as a part of the National Academy of Sciences, AIBS became an independent, member-governed organization in the 1950s. Today, headquartered in Washington, DC, with a staff of approximately 50, AIBS is sustained by a robust membership of some 5,000 biologists and 200 professional societies and scientific organizations; the combined individual membership of the latter exceeds 250,000. AIBS advances its mission through participating in coalition activities in research, education, and public policy; publishing the peer-reviewed journal *BioScience* and the education Web site *ActionBioscience.org*; providing scientific peer-review and advisory services to government agencies and other clients; convening meetings; and managing scientific programs. Web site: www.aibs.org.