

SoundVision Productions®
Science Literacy Project for Public Radio Reporters and Producers
Progress Report
2011/2012

SoundVision wants to once again thank the Department of Energy for making the highly successful *Science Literacy Project* possible. The bulk of the project's activities and findings were documented in last year's report; this year we spent closing out the final details of the project.

In October 2011, SoundVision held a post-workshop teleconference for our 2011 graduates (as we have done for all participants) to consolidate what they'd learned during the workshop. To maximize the *Science Literacy Project*'s impact after it ends, we strengthened and reinforced our alumni's vibrant networking infrastructure so they can continue to connect and support each other, and updated our archive system to ensure all of our science and science journalism resources and presentations will be easy to access and use over time. Finally, we continued to celebrate the triumphs of *Science Literacy Workshop* alumni.

Ripple Effect

As happens every year, the 2011 *Science Literacy Workshop* graduates expanded the impact of their workshop experience by holding science journalism training and information sessions at their stations and writing articles based on the workshops. For example:

- Reporter Megan Hall at WRNI in Providence, Rhode Island began writing a daily blog to share what she had learned. Her news director was so impressed he passed it on to the WRNI board.
- News Director Peter O'Dowd at KJZZ in Phoenix, Arizona, published an article in *Modern Journalist* called "4 Ways to Avoid Mistakes When Reporting on Scientific Studies," based on what he learned at the *Science Literacy Workshop*. He also shared this article on the Public Radio News Directors Incorporated (PRNDI) listserv.
- Like other station-based reporters who attended the 2011 workshop, Casey Miner, then a transportation reporter at KALW in San Francisco, held a station-wide training session based on the dos and don'ts of radio science reporting and production. Now a KALW producer, Casey produces a podcast called *The Field Trip* that "takes science out of the lab."

Alumni Achievements

This year we continued to hear about workshop alumni achievements. A few of these included:

- The Society for Professional Journalists Award to 2011 graduate Craig LeMoult of WSHU public radio in Fairfield, Connecticut for reporting on medical ethics,
- A Knight Science Journalism Fellowship at MIT for 2010 graduate Karen Brown of WFCR Public Radio in Amherst, MA,
- A 2010 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism award to 2009 graduate Gabriel Spitzer for his story on how music rewires the brain, and
- Acceptance to the 2012 MIT Energy Bootcamp for 2011 graduate and well-known public radio journalist Alex Chadwick.

We also regularly hear our alumni's science stories on all public radio networks on shows including *Marketplace*, *All Things Considered*, *RadioLab* and *The World*. Veronique LeCapra and Kirk Sieglar, who graduated in 2011, were hired as science reporters at NPR, and both said their connections with the *Science Literacy Project* played a significant role in that process. Charlie Foster and Casey Miner, class of 2011, worked together on science reports for the Peabody award winning Youth Radio (<http://www.youthradio.org/>). And we're pleased to note that 2011 graduates Josh Kurz and Reid Frazier are reporting for SoundVision's new series *BURN: An Energy Journal*, which was heard on more than 322 stations and won the 2012 AAA Kavli Science Journalism Award. Alex Chadwick is also earning kudos for his work as *BURN*'s host and senior correspondent.

Continuing Education

Throughout the *Science Literacy Project*, SoundVision focused on long-term post-workshop activities to reinforce what graduates learned from the project and continue their education after they went home. Since our last report, we have, as always, conducted a follow-up alumni teleconference call. In our call with 2011 graduates we reviewed the new audio features participants had posted and assessed the usefulness of *Science Literacy* take-home materials. We also discussed what they'd accomplished since the workshop, how they'd used what they learned here, what workshop information they'd shared with others and what suggestions they had for future workshops.

As part of the 2011 teleconference, fellows submitted pieces for critique by veteran editor and producer Gary Covino. Covino reviewed each piece, giving participants individual and specific feedback during the call. Receiving this kind of one-on-one training from a national editor is rare for station reporters and participants greatly appreciated Covino's

comments. “Wow, he is a great editor,” one said. “Thanks for making it possible for us to work with him!”

During the call, participants talked about how important the *Science Literacy Workshop* was to them. Many agreed with the past participant said, “The effects of the workshop are clear. I am able to do pieces on science faster and more easily, with greater confidence and (I think) with better results.”

Participants found workshops on how to research a story especially helpful. In the words of one graduate, “The research class was awesome!” And everyone appreciated the chance to connect with other science journalists. “It’s really great to have people who can possibly collaborate with in the future, and bounce ideas off of,” one said, while another added, “the thing I have taken away most has been the network.”

An editor concluded, “I feel a lot more comfortable now when we have a science story on the air. I feel like we’re not going to get burned because we did something stupid.”

Networking

Over the years, we’ve heard from many *Science Literacy Project* graduates how deeply they appreciate the connections they made during this intensive experience. For some, these connections were one of the most important parts of the workshop, and they continue to benefit our alumni. Our 2011 alumni help each other develop and write stories and post regularly to the Facebook page they established to tell class members about their own stories and other science reporting that would be of interest to the group. They also share information about potential jobs and opportunities.

This year the SoundVision staff continued to maintain communication with all of our alumni, sending them news stories and alerting them to fellowships, workshops, grants and jobs, and graduates have pursued these opportunities. As we completed the project, we also updated past alumni and presenters’ contact information. We were struck by the high percentage of previous participants who continue to maintain their Science Literacy connections, providing each other with professional support and calling on presenters for story-related research or to serve as interview subjects.

Archives and Resources

This year, SoundVision organized and archived our large collection of valuable *Science Literacy Workshop* digital files and older recordings to hard drives and a cloud-based back-up server so they will be preserved and can be used by educators, scholars, producers, broadcasters and the general public for the foreseeable future. The archives will include around 200 *Science Literacy Workshop* presentations on science, science journalism and radio craft that we have recorded since the first workshop in 1999.

The project added two especially valuable new climate change tip sheets to its archive of science journalism resources this year. Both are written and researched by Yale Forum on

Climate Change & the Media contributing editor Bud Ward. One offers insights and suggestions for reporters who are covering news about climate change, while the other provides useful resources on the subject. All of our science literacy resources are available on the *Science Literacy Project* website (<http://www.scienceliteracyproject.org>)

We are proud of the excellent reputation the *Science Literacy Project*, with the support of the Department of Energy, has earned among participants, presenters and the general public. Although the project has ended, we're still getting a steady stream of requests from reporters, editors, producers, station managers and online journalists clamoring to get into the program. We hope that in years to come, we will again be able to meet the ever-increasing need for in-depth science journalism training.

SoundVision is profoundly grateful to the Department of Energy for the foresight and funding that made the *Science Literacy Project* possible. DOE has been an excellent partner that has been of immeasurable help to this project. We deeply appreciate your generous support and hope that we can work together again in the future