



Am I Making Myself Clear?: A Scientist's Guide to Talking to the Public

By Cornelia Dean

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What we don't know can hurt us?and does so every day. Climate change, health care policy, weapons of mass destruction, an aging infrastructure, stem cell research, endangered species, space exploration?all affect our lives as citizens and human beings in practical and profound ways. But unless we understand the science behind these issues, we cannot make reasonable decisions?and worse, we are susceptible to propaganda cloaked in scientific rhetoric.

To convey the facts, this book suggests, scientists must take a more active role in making their work accessible to the media, and thus to the public. In *Am I Making Myself Clear?* Cornelia Dean, a distinguished science editor and reporter, urges scientists to overcome their institutional reticence and let their voices be heard beyond the forum of scholarly publication. By offering useful hints for improving their interactions with policymakers, the public, and her fellow journalists, Dean aims to change the attitude of scientists who scorn the mass media as an arena where important work is too often misrepresented or hyped. Even more important, she seeks to convince them of the value and urgency of communicating to the public.

Am I Making Myself Clear? shows scientists how to speak to the public, handle the media, and describe their work to a lay audience on paper, online, and over the airwaves. It is a book that will improve the tone and content of debate over critical issues and will serve the interests of science and society.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In what Chris Mooney and Sheril Kirshenbaum call, in a recent book, "Unscientific America," scientists need more than ever to know how to communicate their work to the public. They'll find help in highly regarded New York Times science reporter Dean presents a handbook for any scientist called upon to talk to a reporter, go on television, lobby legislators or in general answer that age-old question, What exactly is it you do? In this age of sound bites and Twitter, Dean exhorts her readers to keep things short and simple. Her advice ranges from what to wear on TV to how to write an op-ed piece to avoiding the appearance of personal gain when lobbying members of Congress. Many of Dean's suggestions are common sense (know what you're going to say, don't slouch), but make useful tips for anyone who comes into contact with the media, courts, or legislative bodies.

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Review

Highly regarded *New York Times* science reporter Dean presents a handbook for any scientist called upon to talk to a reporter, go on television, lobby legislators or in general answer that age-old question, What exactly is it you do? In this age of sound bites and Twitter, Dean exhorts her readers to keep things short and simple. Her advice ranges from what to wear on TV to how to write an op-ed piece to avoiding the appearance of personal gain when lobbying members of Congress. Many of Dean's suggestions are common sense (know what you're going to say, don't slouch), but make useful tips for anyone who comes into contact with the media, courts, or legislative bodies. (*Publishers Weekly* 2009-09-14)

Book-length lamentations over the state of American scientific literacy are in no short supply, though a consensus on who is to blame may never be reached. Fortunately, Harvard professor and *New York Times* science editor Cornelia Dean cuts through this debate, getting down to the practical aspect of improving scientists' communication skills. Dean's advice comes in the form of a concise handbook, touching on everything from interview preparation to blogging, so some suggestions come across as easier said than done. Nevertheless, she drives home her core idea: If society is unhappy with the way the public relates to scientists' work, there are many simple things scientists can do to meet the public halfway. (*Seed* 2009-10-01)

I strongly recommend this book...Any researcher looking to communicate better will find Cornelia Dean's book invaluable. The range of ways to communicate that she covers is enlightening, challenging researchers to consider new outlets. (Kathy Sykes *Times Higher Education Supplement* 2009-10-22)

One can only hope that researchers--and the academic administrators who decide what the scientists of tomorrow need to know--read [this] concise, sharply written volume and take [its] message to heart. The process of reconnecting science and society cannot start soon enough. (Tom Jacobs *Miller-McCune* 2009-11-12)

Am I Making Myself Clear? is as much about why scientists need to talk to the public as it is about how we should talk science to the public. [Cornelia Dean] argues that scientists need to develop a civic persona that finds some way to communicate science. Dean's wisdom, especially for engaging in the political arena, is delivered with a mix of authority and charm...*Am I Making Myself Clear?* ought to be required reading in all science graduate programs. (Peter Kareiva *Science* 2010-01-01)

If you want the facts, laid down in a simple, unfussy style, then get a copy of *Am I Making Myself Clear?* by Cornelia Dean, veteran science writer and former science editor of *The New York Times*. This book should sit on the shelf of every scientist, science communicator and university press officer. I've never read a better, more thorough guide to science communication in all its forms. Dean's suggestions for how to be interviewed by a journalist--for print, radio and television--are spot on. From the preparation you need to do, including how to dress on TV, to always assuming everything you say is "on the record," her book is packed full of valuable information. She also advises on producing content for the web, writing your own book and press releases, and dealing with politicians. (Gia Milinovich *Nature* 2009-12-10)

About the Author

Cornelia Dean is a science writer and former science editor at the *New York Times* and teaches seminars on the communication of science at Harvard University.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paula Jackson:

Now a day people who Living in the era exactly where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources within it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each info they get. How individuals to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Examining a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information particularly this *Am I Making Myself Clear?: A Scientist's Guide to Talking to the Public* book because book offers you rich data and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

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Josette Leonard:

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Terry Speller:

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