

PRB

INFORM
EMPOWER
ADVANCE

A Field Guide to Journalists

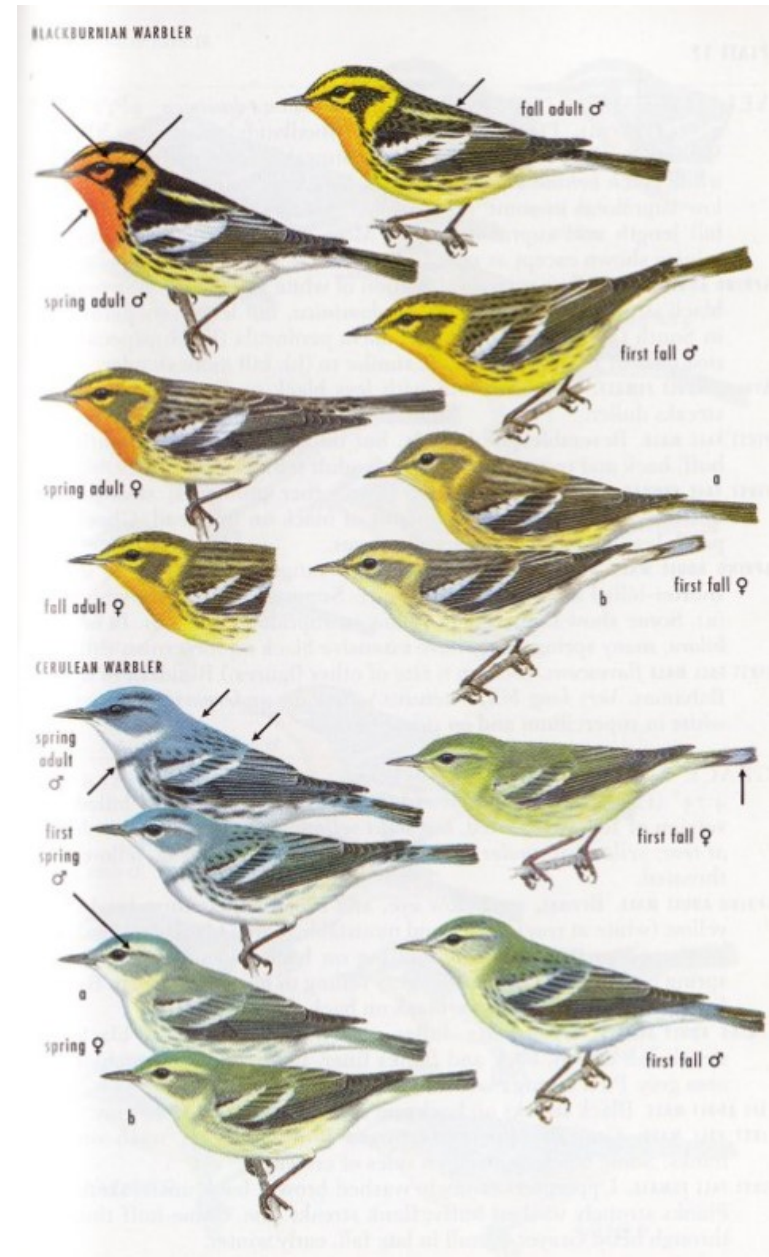
Mark Mather @MarkSMather

May 2020

POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU | www.prb.org

A Field Guide to Journalists

- On short deadlines. What's the story?
- They love hearing and telling stories
 - Conflict
 - Change, reversals
- They want the bigger picture/historical context
- Many newspapers threatened/going extinct?



Types of Journalists

- Print/online
- Television/Radio
 - Recorded
 - Live!!!
- Freelance writer or blogger
- Data journalism
- Scientists as journalists?



Tips for Talking to Journalists

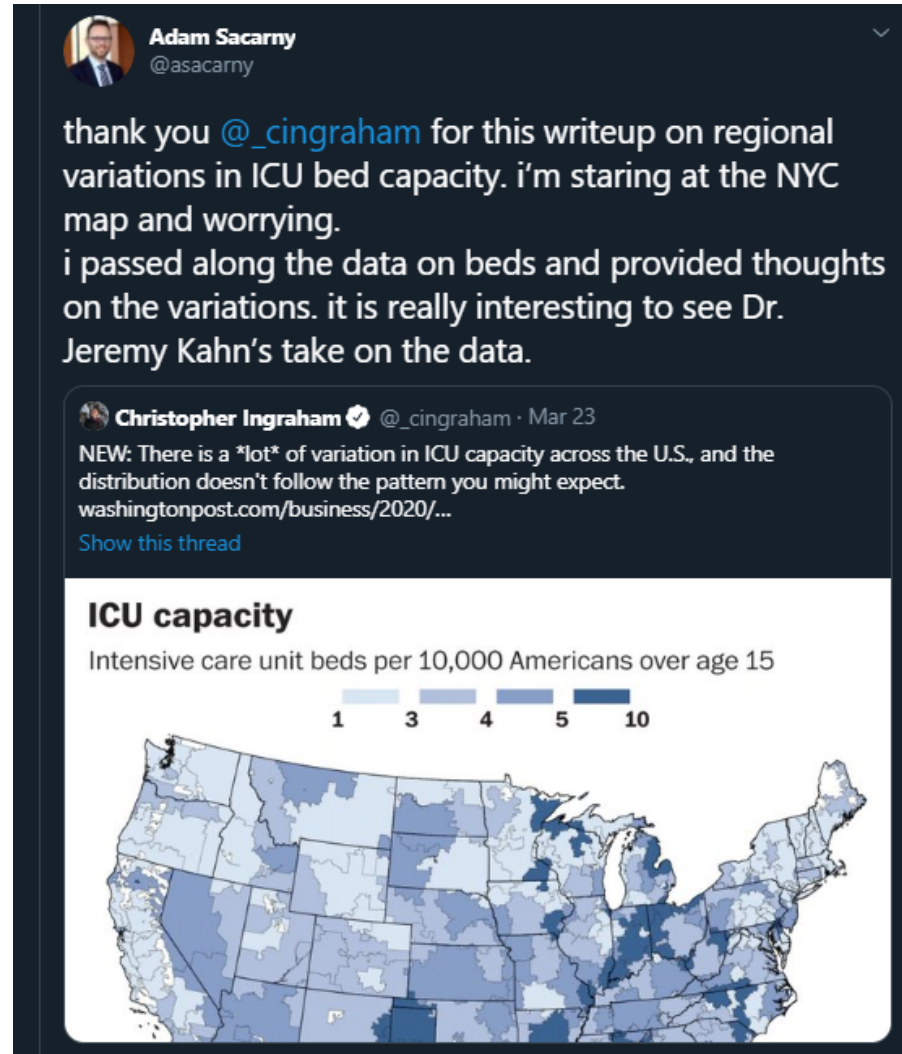
- Prepare your talking points in advance
- Tell a story and set the context
 - Start with the big picture and then tell them how your work fits in
- Make a key point and then allow time for questions
- Use numbers sparingly. “About 1-in-5 families...”
- Provide examples/metaphors if you can
- Anticipate their questions in advance:
 - Why does this matter?
 - What does this mean for [fill in the blank]?
 - Were there any surprises?
- Talk to Columbia’s Office of Communications and Public Affairs
- Build a relationship and become a trusted source

Avoiding Potential Pitfalls

- Back out if you are uncomfortable with the premise of the article
 - Look them up in advance and feel free to decline an interview if it's not a good fit
- Respond right away, even if you can't talk until tomorrow
- Don't say anything you would not want to appear on the front page of the NYT
 - Be careful with off-the-cuff remarks
- It's okay to pass on a question. If you don't know the answer, say so
- Avoid passive voice, jargon and acronyms. Be conversational
- Focus on your findings, not your methods

Connecting with Journalists on Twitter

- A great way for journalists to find you
- Control your message
- Connect with journalists after an interview
- Find journalists you like and follow them
- Retweet and comment on their stories



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter thread. At the top, a tweet from Adam Sacarny (@asacarny) says: "thank you @_cingraham for this writeup on regional variations in ICU bed capacity. i'm staring at the NYC map and worrying. i passed along the data on beds and provided thoughts on the variations. it is really interesting to see Dr. Jeremy Kahn's take on the data." Below this is a retweet from Christopher Ingraham (@cingraham) dated Mar 23, which includes a link to a Washington Post article and a "Show this thread" link. At the bottom of the screenshot is a choropleth map of the United States titled "ICU capacity" with the subtitle "Intensive care unit beds per 10,000 Americans over age 15". The map uses a color scale from light blue (1) to dark blue (10) to represent the number of ICU beds per 10,000 people. Higher concentrations are visible in the Northeast, Midwest, and parts of the South.

Adam Sacarny @asacarny

thank you @_cingraham for this writeup on regional variations in ICU bed capacity. i'm staring at the NYC map and worrying. i passed along the data on beds and provided thoughts on the variations. it is really interesting to see Dr. Jeremy Kahn's take on the data.

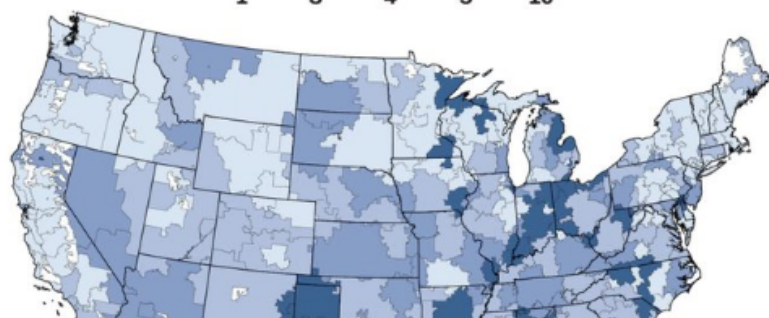
Christopher Ingraham @cingraham · Mar 23

NEW: There is a *lot* of variation in ICU capacity across the U.S., and the distribution doesn't follow the pattern you might expect. [washingtonpost.com/business/2020/...](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/...)

[Show this thread](#)

ICU capacity
Intensive care unit beds per 10,000 Americans over age 15

1 3 4 5 10



Thank you!

Beth Jarosz

bjarosz@prb.org

@DataGeekB

Mark Mather

mmather@prb.org

@MarkSMather