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/go ing 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

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.

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/...
Thank you!

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