

The impact of Science Y'all: A grassroots student blog

EMILY H. G. COOPERDOCK^{1*}, RACHEL BERNARD²,
TOMAS CAPALDI², ADAM PAPENDIECK²

¹Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, MA,
02543, USA (*correspondence: ecooperdock@whoi.edu)

²Jackson School of Geosciences, The University of Texas at
Austin, Austin, TX, 78712, USA

Opportunities to communicate science in plain language are few and far between for many graduate students and undergraduates. At a point in their careers when these scientists-in-training are mastering professional scientific discourse, the art of communicating to the general public often suffers. Identifying this issue, graduate students at The University of Texas' Jackson School of Geosciences (JSG) created "*Science Y'all*," a blog to serve as a platform to share research and experiences with their peers in language that the general public can understand. Students are encouraged to submit original work on the topic of their choice, the content is monitored by an editorial board of graduate students, and the site is hosted through the official JSG webpage. Since its inception in fall 2016, the site has had 23 unique B.S, M.S., and Ph.D student contributors, and 32 original posts. Topics range from descriptions of scientific research, to commentaries on policy and scientific communication, to advice and insights about academia.

The impact of the blog has been felt far beyond the original intent to provide a medium for sharing experiences among JSG students. As of March 2018, the site has received over 14,500 visits and the top five most popular blog posts all have over 340 reads. By far the most successful is a blog post about diversity in the Geosciences at the PhD level, which topped 4,600 reads, gaining the attention of major organizations like AGU and NSF. This post has been expanded for publication as a Nature Geoscience Commentary (Bernard and Cooperdock, *in press*).

A large part of *Science Y'all*'s success can be attributed to the way authors and their growing personal and professional networks share their posts on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter). This is confirmed by site analytics that show that ~70% of site traffic is directly to specific posts. This shows that the success of a scientific blog is a combination of factors, including relevant, easy-to-digest topics and visibility. *Science Y'all* shows how undergraduate and graduate student communities at all universities can be empowered to engage with the public through scientific writing.