

The Brain is the New Atom of Science

Aka Brains are Hot Now

Good Morning, Nerd On?

We have 80 billion neurons (better known as brain cells), and each of them communicates with billions of other neurons. How's that for working with 'big data' that we can learn from? Learning from the actual organism that build organisations makes sense. However, the science of communications is no easy subject matter. The challenge increases when having to communicate science in a way that effectively leads communities into awareness, and change.

Think about neuroscientists communicating their research and the societal implications of their findings to the public, in a way that resonates with non-scientists. Communicating science is challenging and the transformation of communication by digital and interactive media makes the challenge even greater. Similar to how any person can now become a 'journalist' (social media, blogs, forums), the transformation of digital communications is constantly exposing field 'beginners' and 'experts' in science, to breakthrough research. The internet has become one of our primary resources for gaining knowledge and insight. Similar to fake media, we can be exposed to neuromyths. But who is getting 'the real deal' and which influencers are sheepishly following the myths of neuroscience (marketing behaviour, the art of negotiations, and neuro-ethics in the administration of healthcare across cultures).

A cultural shift is needed in how the experts in neuroscience communicate findings across other disciplines. We need to recognize and reward public outreach with the intention to bear fruit (think about influencing public policy, voting results, consumer behaviour, education, healthcare), by identifying and developing neuroscience communication experts. In this process, we need to create awareness and best educate the public on new developments in the field of innovation as a result neuroscience.

Not all science in the public sphere is treated equally. We read about GMOs (genetically modified organisms), and nanotechnology more often than we do about the science of the human brain. Perhaps the scientists must engage more frequently with journalists and in leadership circles, for the further dissemination of (well-articulated) information. As with any other discipline, selective sharing frequently misinforms, and misguides for whichever reasons (think of for example, food security, and the safety of products).

Let's learn from popular programmes towards best training ourselves and others, therewith creating awareness and improved public engagement. We're all carrying 'big data', and we have the capacity to verbalise it where the computer/internet cannot.

Some tools we can all learn from;

- 1) A resource for individuals interested in communicating the importance of biomedical research to elected officials, the press, and the general public. The guide provides tools, information, and tips on how to be an effective advocate.
http://sfn.org/index.aspx?pagename=GuideToPublicAdvocacy_main

- 2) More about brain facts: a comprehensive and accessible introduction to neuroscience designed for lay audiences and high school students.
<http://www.sfn.org/index.aspx?pagename=brainfacts>

- 3) Participate! Check out Brain Awareness Week (BAW). This is an annual celebration of the brain coordinated by the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, uniting the efforts of universities, hospitals, patient advocacy groups, professional associations, government agencies, service organizations and K-12 schools around the world. www.dana.org/brainweek.

- 4) Brainy Kids; another online science resources for students, teachers, and parents. Access <http://www.dana.org/resources/brainykids/>.

- 5) Or access the Brain Expert Directory, which provides members of the media access to Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives members, more than 280 leading experts in neuroscience who are willing to assist in reporting of neuroscience news. <http://www.dana.org/media/resourcedirectory/>

- 6) For the overachievers, access the Science Communications Program, which is a professional development summer residency for scientists, journalists, public and private sector communications professionals and educators responsible for communicating about science. Access <http://www.banffcentre.ca/programs/program.aspx?id=344>.

- 7) To the brilliantnaires, check out Communicating Science: Tools for Scientists and Engineers. You can attend science communication workshops and online resources including webinars, how-to tips for media interviews,

strategies for identifying public outreach opportunities, and links to articles, books and other websites. Access <http://www.aaas.org/communicatingscience>.

- 8) The creatives; sign up for a Science Media Production Internship. This is studentship offering financial support for practicing biomedical scientists to undertake a postgraduate qualification in science media production at Imperial College London and to then use these skills in a six-month internship working in the broadcast industry. Check out <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Public-engagement/Grants/Science-Media-Studentships/index.htm>.

I love you,

Natasja

Some Media Highlights in Review;

14/05/2019

- Namib Times reports that a tanker ship sprung an oil leak alongside in the port of Walvis Bay, Namibia. The article reports that the tanker ship is believed to have started leaking oil after a bearing seal on one of the vessel's propeller shaft failed.
- New Era reports that the Ministry of Land Reform has put aside N\$120 million to ensure equitable distribution and access to land to previously disadvantaged Namibians. The article reports that in the area of post-settlement the Ministry of Land Reform has been systematically working on a phased approach to rehabilitate the dilapidated farm infrastructure on some resettlement farms and reduce current backlog.

15/05/2019

- Market Watch reports that upstream oil and gas spending in 2018 rose by nearly 4% year on year to US\$477 billion due to a rise in oil prices and a shift to shale gas and projects with shorter construction periods. The article reports that investment in low-carbon energy was relatively stable at about US\$620 billion last year, but growth has stagnated since a 3% rise in 2016.
- The Namibian reports that the landmark UN report in October concluded that CO₂ emissions must drop by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. The article reports that global energy investment in 2018 split across the fuel

supply and electric power sectors, totalled US\$1.85 trillion about the same as in 2017.

- Namibia Economist reports that the Bank of Namibia reported that the level of international reserves increased to N\$32.6 billion at the end of March from N\$31.6 billion recorded in February. The article reports that the Bank of Namibia also noted that broad money supply growth declined to 6.9% year-on-year in March 2019 from 8.9% in the previous month.

16/05/2019

- Confidante reports that challenges of world economic slowing down include diamond prices, N\$/US\$ exchange rate volatility, inflationary pressures and fuel prices. Mines and Energy Minister, Tom Alweendo, said that the mining industry is the single most important primary sector to Namibia's economic growth.
- Market Watch reports that Eco (Atlantic) Oil and Gas has received governmental approval to drill an exploration well within its PEL-30 license (Cooper block), targeting the Osprey-prospect. The article reports that stabilising crude oil prices provide a measure of relief to frontier explorations and should support investments in sub-Saharan Africa's upstream over the next years.
- Market Watch reports that Organisation of the Petroleum Countries (OPEC) stated that world demand for its oil would be higher than expected this year as supply growth from rivals including US shale producers slows. The article reports that Organisation of the Petroleum Countries (OPEC), Russia and other non-member producers are reducing output by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) from January 1 for six months.
- The Namibian reports that President Hage Geingob has rejected proposals that were made to investigate crimes committed by the Swapo party against its political prisoners during the liberation struggle. Geingob said that Namibia at Independence also adopted a blanket amnesty that pardoned those who committed alleged crimes, including Koevoet, the Swapo party and the former South African administration.
- New Era reports that Ondangwa Urban by-election candidate, Johannes Martin has vowed to deliver basic health, recreational and sports facilities in the town. The article reports that the candidate said he would also push for proper sanitation at the informal settlement as Ondangwa is also affected by the deadly Hepatitis E.
- New Era reports that the Prime Minister, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila has called for an accelerated process of reforming the United Nations to ensure that a level playing field is realised. The article reports that the decisions by the UN Secretary Council are simply meant to advance certain nations' interests to the disadvantage of the rest of the world.

17/05/2019

- New Era reports that a Namport oil spill occurred when the tanker vessel leaked heavy-duty oil after one of the vessel's propeller shafts failed. The article reports that the owner of the vessel engaged a local company to clean up the affected areas under the supervision of government representatives.
- New Era reports that during the 22-member High Level Panel on the Namibian Economy (HLPE), N\$15 billion has been tasked towards investments in the next two years. The article reports that the four key progress areas include private sector investment, job creation, bottlenecks and needed interventions to grow the economy.
- Namibian Sun reports that a survey gauging the private sector's feelings about the proposed National Equity Economic Empowerment Framework (NEEEF), indicates a general sense of hopelessness among Namibian-owned businesses. The government states that the function of the Namibia Investment Promotion Act (NIPA) is to promote sustainable economic development by attracting foreign and domestic investment.

19/05/2019

- Erongo reports that the oil storage facility in Walvis Bay consists of offshore and onshore operations, a 6.5-kilometre pipeline and tank farm. Deputy project manager of the oil storage facility, Kondwanie Chirembo, said that the railway construction works to connect various private fuel storage and distribution sites such as Puma, Engen and Total still need to be done.

20/05/2019

- Market Watch reports that oil edged higher towards US\$73 a barrel, supported by real and threatened supply disruptions in the Middle East and heading for a weekly gain. The article reports that Brent crude oil rose 15 US cents to US\$72.77 a barrel at 0908 GMT. US West Intermediate crude added 24 US cents to US\$63.11.
- Namibian Sun reports that the Ministry of Environment stepped up its inspections during the 2018/19 financial year, despite ongoing government financial woes. The article reports that President Hage Geingob called for a national clean-up campaign, said that it has put waste management issues on the national agenda and inspired operations across the length and breadth of the country.
- The Namibian reports that President Hage Geingob has cancelled a scheduled meeting with the Namibia Transport and Taxi Union (NTTU)

leadership after taxi drivers claimed to have lost faith in his presidency. Ministry of Works spokesperson, Julius Ngweda, said that the works ministry has appointed a consultant who will work with the ministry to amend the Road Transportation Act 74 of 1977, which Ngweda stated is not speaking to the current environment we are in.