

What is your story?

Description

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Wrapping up #MySciStory

Storified by [David Manly](#) · Thu, Feb 07 2013 08:04:53

Jeanne Garabino and I did a session at Science Online 2013 focusing in on the uses of first-person narrative storytelling to communicate science. Why don't more journalists and communicators use personal narrative (namely, using "I") to discuss science? Why are they trained so stringently against its use? What are the pros and cons of using it?

Now it's time for #myscistory with @JeanneGarb and @davidmanly #scio13Matthew R. Francis Scientific storytelling. This looks promising. #myscistoryAlex Warneke

In a session now to learn about using narrative to communicate science. Might try this out. #MySciStory #Scio13Katie Mack

The #myscistory session at #scio13 starts with one of those storytelling Vonage commercials as an example of personal narrativeEmily Gertz

We chose this commercial from Vonage, because it really showcased the point of how a personal story (even a small one) can make what you learn a lot more interesting. While not strictly about science, the personal narrative on display really showcased our point.

Unlimited Calling to India with Vonage World "Customer Testimonial" Gitavonage

Using the commercial as an example, we asked: Why can't you use first-person narrative to sell science?

If advertising psychology is using personal narrative to sell products, why don't scientists?

#MySciStory #Scio13Jessica Rohde

#myscistory #scio13 kicking off with a commercial "advertising psychology uses personal narrative to sell products" can science do it too?Haley Bridger

Can we sell science like a product? Taking lessons from a tearjerker vonage commercial. #myscistory #scio13Rachel Dearborn IY

If advertising psychology "telling stories" sells phone plan, why not use it to sell science?

#myscistory #scio13Emily Gertz

But why do first-person narratives make such an impact?

Humans are story driven species says @davidmanly #myscistory #scio13Laura Wheeler

@davidmanly "We're human, we tell stories." #myscistory #scio13Matthew R. Francis

The things people remember the most are the stories that impacted them "learning without being aware you are learning #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak

#myscistory #scio13 the things you remember most are the stories that impact youHaley Bridger

Stories in commercials are very targeted to a demographic. We can use similar targeting questions for our own narratives #myscistory #scio13Dr A Roehrich

So, we came up with our own definition of personal narrative:

On now â€œ #myscistory session at #scio13. â€œblending the reporting of facts with the writing style of fictionâ€œ= personal narrativeJulie Henry
Jeanne and I came from different education backgrounds (lab researcher & communicator and a scientist turned journalist), but we both noticed that first-person narrative was actively discouraged in both our fields. But why?
â€œDonâ€™t use I â€œ we are story makers not story tellersâ€œis a common theme #myscistory #scio13Dr A Roehrich
â€œWe are storytellers, not storymakersâ€œ said @davidmanlyâ€™s journalism prof. Donâ€™t rewrite history, donâ€™t use first person #myscistory #scio13Lou Woodley
Idea is to blend reporting of facts with writing techniques of fictionâ€œlike spending time in someone elseâ€™s headâ€œ #myscistory #scio13Emily Gertz
Academia actively discourages use of the first person in scientific papers. Scientists therefore not used to using it? #myscistory #scio13Lou Woodley
If you want someone who is â€œnot looking for your science,â€œ grabbing them with narrative can them into the science. #myscistoryAfternoon Napper
. @davidmanly: Personal storytelling helps engage audienceâ€™s emotions, which helps them remember, better #MySciStoryJessica Rohde
Using personal narrative in science allows readers to spend time in another personâ€™s head. @davidmanly #myscistory #scio13Nicholas Mallos
All throughout our session, the utterly fantastic and amazing Perrin Ireland (@experriment) â€œscience scribedâ€œ to the right of us, taking notes using pictures and words. Was amazing!
Cool real-time story-boarding by @experriment during the #MySciStory session. #scio13
<http://pic.twitter.com/0LdDjrG6>Katie Mack
Science is often told in the third-person, but WHY?
#scio13 #myscistory a lot of science writing is done in the third person! Even courses tell students not to write in the first person!Laura Wheeler
Why shouldnâ€™t technical writing be a little less boring and science writing be really exciting? Use â€œIâ€œ #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak
Yes! MT @LouWoodley: Stories can evoke emotional responsesâ€œgets the reader involved & makes the message more memorable #myscistory #scio13Meg Rosenberg
We the each shared a successful example of using personal narrative â€œ Jeanne on pregnancy (read [here](#)) and me on being an identical twin (read [here](#)). Sharing personal information makes a story memorable, as you can tell from the tweets below, I donâ€™t think anyone will forget Jeanneâ€™s!
And now for a moment of TMI brought to you by @JeanneGarb #myscistory #scio13 #mucousplug #yuckPamela L. Gay
Weâ€™re hearing about a giant gelatinous ball of booger. #myscistory #scio13 #yumNadia Drake
Audience laughter as @JeanneGarb recaps the story of her mucus plug â€œ also a popular blog post that people related to. #myscistory #scio13Lou Woodley
@JeanneGarb just set the record for the number of times a person said â€œmucous plugâ€œ in a 5 minute period. #Scio13 #myscistoryJohn Romano
#scio13 #myscistory @JeanneGarb talking about mucus and how she tricked people into learning science with her gross story!Laura Wheeler
I wouldnâ€™t say tricked â€œ!
Whereâ€™s the line between self-indulgent memoir and cautionary tale? A healthy dose of self-deprecation? #MySciStoryJessica Rohde
#myscistory #scio13 the â€œrealâ€œ first person can be electric â€œ grabs the reader by the shirtHaley Bridger

We then brought up author of "Superbug," Maryn McKenna, who wrote a personal post on her Wired blog about the time she ate contaminated peanut butter (read [here](#)). Since Maryn never writes in first person, I asked her why she decided to shift for this particular piece "because she became part of the story."

First person telling grabs the reader and lets them know "it can happen to you" @davidmanly discussing @marynmck post #MySciStory #scio13Dr A Roehrich

Currently comparing CDC report on tainted peanut butter with @marynmck version on how she contaminated herself #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak

Ordinary reporting is dry, detached; personal narrative (ex. @marynmck's food-poisoning story) engages the reader. #myscistory #scio13Matthew R. Francis

"Everybody has eaten something from the back of the fridge that you shouldn't have, but you didn't want to go shopping." #myscistory #scio13Emily Gertz

#myscistory #scio13 Trick to first person- don't let it be a self indulgent memoir. Balance the TMHeather Reiff

There is nothing wrong with using third- person days @davidmanly be exciting & use humour #scio13 #myscistoryLaura Wheeler

#myscistory #scio13 Would you rather hear about a friend of a friend or YOUR friend? Power in the "Do you want to BE Kevin Bacon?"Heather Reiff

"Being the bat shit crazy scientist brings it up a level in impact" There is something special about writing with "Do you want to BE Kevin Bacon?" #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak

Being bat shit crazy makes things interesting, to say the least. And, we're all a little "Bat shit crazy" aren't we?

RT @LouWoodley: Does writing in the first person require more words? Could this be one reason it's not used more? #myscistory #scio13Christie Wilcox

The only way to find out how much you're really willing to share is to try sharing #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak

@davidmanly : how much to share? The only way to know is to try it. Humor is easier for many, but comfort is key. #myscistory #scio13Matthew R. Francis

As useful as writing in first-person is, you should always focus on the story. If you think using first-person will help, give it a try! If not, don't.

RT @DrMRFrancis: real question: does this serve the story? Sometimes taking yourself out is best for the story. #myscistory #scio13skullsinthestars

Use yourself as the frame but don't become the story- cautions @davidmanly #myscistory #scio13Julie Henry

@ScienceOnline Caution: Don't become the story. Ask yourself: Is this serving the message [about science]? -@davidmanly #myscistory #scio13Katie Mack

"Nobody gives a shit about you" but if the you moves the story forward, then use it #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak

On being careful with 1st person: "Nobody gives a shit about you." "Except our moms!" "Not mine!" -@huler #myscistory #scio13Eric Bowen

But if it is so successful, why don't scientists use it?

@ScienceOnline One of the problems we face in outreach is convincing scientists they're interesting. -@BenLillie #myscistory #scio13Katie Mack

Cosmos was a very successful science TV show that used personal narrative. Scientists hated Sagan for it, everyone else loved it #MySciStoryJessica Rohde

But, in using first-person, you **do** need to be careful!

.@davidmanly: Make sure you never outshine the story you are trying to tell. #MySciStoryJessica Rohde

Your own memories can be different than the facts, so how you fact check yourself? #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak
#myscistory #scio13 memory is malleable â€“ thin line between creative license and fabricationHaley Bridger
Caveat of 1st person narratives? RT @DrMRFrancis: Memory is fallible; how does one fact-check oneâ€™s own experience? #myscistory #scio13Lou Woodley
Be careful of the boundary between taking poetic license with your narrative and outright fabrication #MySciStoryJessica Rohde
#myscistory â€œeyes you can fact check your own personal narrative.â€ Itâ€™s not all willy-nilly. #scio13Clare Fieseler
Still, the people in this room are by and large pro-personal narrative in science communication. #myscistory #scio13Chris Goforth
And Perrin never stopped throughout the entire session!
Fascinating watching the story of #myscistory appear live at #scio13.
<http://pic.twitter.com/zcjPWd3QM>Marc Merlin
First-person also helps shine a light and give the personal story behind the science, makes it human and relateable.
#myscistory #scio13 the case for first person: most people donâ€™t know scientists â€“ seeing the scientist/writer behind the piece has valueHaley Bridger
Sound advice, sometimes a fine line MT @amsciam: â€œBe sure u donâ€™t outshine the story youâ€™re trying to tellâ€ @davidmanly #myscistory #scio13Sonia Furtado Neves
If we want students to become scientists, itâ€™s easier if they actually know a few- great case for story-telling! #scio13 #myscistoryJulie Henry
For the love of God will someone say the word EMPATHY!!!! First person narrative. #Scio13 #MySciStoryJohn Romano
We then introduced an activity â€“ we displayed a list of scientific terms and words for a variety of disciplines (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math, Astronomy & Engineering) and asked the audience to share *their* stories. â€œPitch us your narrativeâ€
â€œPitch us your narrativeâ€ activity: choose a science term from a list â€“ what personal story can you tell to explain it? #myscistory #scio13Julie Henry
. @sciencecomedianâ€™s pers.nar. pitch: why do you get cold when you step out of a pool?
Evaporation is an endothermic reaction #MySciStoryJessica Rohde
What is the thing that brings the pieces together? Finding out is the â€œEureka momentâ€ #myscistory #scio13Dr A Roehrich
@cqchoi sez: Math is frikkinâ€™ everywhere; recognition was a big eureka moment. #myscistory #scio13Matthew R. Francis
When you include yourself in a story, passion comes through and a reader will see that #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak
Love hearing these anecdotes from people in the #MySciStory session! Keep em comin scientists!Jessica Rohde
Great closing exercise in #myscistory session â€“ slide of science words, audience asked to recount the personal stories they prompt #scio13Lou Woodley
â€œI didnâ€™t care about science until it directly affected me- personal narrative is all I have to get people to care.â€ #myscistory #scio13Dr A Roehrich
For some, the personal narrative is the only way to get people to care. #scio13 #myscistoryAnna RascouÃ«t-Paz
â€œThere is a market for bat shit crazyâ€ #myscistory #scio13Erin Podolak

Ha " what is it? RT @ErinPodolak: "There is a market for bat shit crazy" #myscistory #scio13Kathleen Raven
Just watch any reality tv and you'll know that there is, and probably will always be a market for, the bat shit crazy.
Know when to use empathy! It will help you better relate to your audience. #myscistory #scio13Alex Warneke
. @DrPeteEtchells Yep, and totally illustrates the point " people gel when they share #myscistory #scio13Lou Woodley
The audience seemed a little sad that it was over so quick, as there were still plenty of hands left in the air to share their stories.
Super session from @JeanneGarb @davidmanly #myscistory #scio13Laura Wheeler
Thanks @davidmanly @JeanneGarb for leading an important session on personal narrative in science! #scio13 #myscistoryJulie Henry
Storytelling at #scio13 #myscistory @marynmck gets first personal. #sciencscribe @davidmanly @JeanneGarb <http://pic.twitter.com/0ta3l0kk>David Butler
Personal narrative session : "you're sharing a small, curated slice of yourself" #scio13 #myscistoryMelissa J Bodeau
Thank you everyone for a great session about #myscistory!David Manly
See #myscistory on 1st-person narrative! MT @JacquelynGill: Someone pushes back: "process is boring." Doesn't have to be! #scio13 #scioSDMKatie Mack
Watched Jurassic Park!fell in love with dinosaur..mammals ate dinosaurs..Hominids ate mammals!Emily Became a scientist #MySciStory :3Emily Taylor
ScienceOnline day one <http://sfy.co/cDaK> #scio13 #myscistory #storify #scio13haulFrank Nuijens
You people and your stories: the #myscistory hashtag has way more tweets than some of the other sessions. *scrolling* *scrolling*Eva Amsen
And with that, our session was over! We got a big round of applause, but the biggest was for Perrin, whose finished Science Scribe was a sight to behold!
And now, it's on to Scientific Storytelling, #sciostory! @jeannegarb and @davidmanly #sciencscribe #scio13 <http://pic.twitter.com/q0SxcUvMPerrin> Ireland
#sciostory part 2: Pitch Us Your Narrative @jeannegarb @davidmanly #scio13 #sciencscribe <http://pic.twitter.com/oGWuySZHPerrin> Ireland

Category

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2. Science Online 2013

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