Put your best face forward:
How to talk to media

iSkills Workshop • Roger Reka
Saturday 10 February 2018
Inforum, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto
Agenda

Objective: learn, through interactive instruction, the fundamental skills required to master the media interview.

Four main teaching points:
1. A crash course on public relations
2. How to invite the media
3. Spokesperson training
4. Following up on your success

Perspective of the workshop: PR & libraries

Method of instruction: practical & activity-based
A crash course on public relations
Teaching Point 1
“Public relations (PR) is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization (such as a business, government agency, or a nonprofit organization) and the public.”

Grunig & Hunt, 1984
Why should we care about public relations?

- Increase public awareness of programs, products & services
- Increase involvement from the public
- Create, change, build, or enhance your public image
- Help build public and private support for libraries.
- Help you reach new audiences
- Clarify misunderstandings about your organization
- Mobilize opinion leaders in your community to become supporters

ALA, 2017
If we don't tell our story, someone else will.
Community Engagement Librarian

Excellent public relations skills, tact, resourcefulness, flexibility and the ability to perform in challenging situations and as part of a team, with an emphasis on customer service and technology.

User Experience & Student Outreach Librarian

and student life groups; and programming for students. This position leads promotion and public relations around student services and therefore demonstrates creativity in terms of messaging campaigns and ways of connecting with students.

Communications & Advocacy Officer

- Manage media relations.

Communications/User Services Librarian – Librarian II

11. Proven ability to select the most effective communication channels for a situation and to strategically develop a marketing/outreach plan from the conception of ideas through to completion of projects.
Inviting the media
Teaching Point 2
Typical reporter schedule

- 9 a.m.: Journalists read newspapers, websites and other sources they get their news from. Most also attend morning editorial meetings with editors and team members to discuss daily assignments.
- 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. or so: Calls, Scheduling and arranging interviews
- 2 p.m.: Final Interviews and writing time
- 3 p.m.: Editors start wanting finished copy.
When to contact the media for a media interview

- First contact: 1 week out
- Second contact: 48 hrs out
- Reminder: < 24 hrs out
Is your event noteworthy?

- **Timing**
  - Topics that are current are interesting. Interesting makes good news.
  - Need to be quick—if it happened today, it’s news. If it happened last week, it’s no longer interesting

- **Significance**
  - The number of people that are involved or affected
  - Does it affect the community at large?

- **Prominence**
  - Are important figures people involved? Notable people increases the interest.

- **Human interest**
  - Stories that appeal to emotion
How to contact the media

Phone
Email
Social media
Write a media advisory

**Title:** Succinct and attention-grabbing; explains what is happening

**Introduction:** Very short paragraph that sparks the reporter's interest; maximum 2-3 sentences.

**What:** Provide a brief description of the event.

**When:** Date of the event. Specific timings that the reporter will be needed for.

**Where:** Location.

**Note to editors:** Special information about getting to, or expectations about the event.
Spokesperson training
Teaching Point 3
Devel op key messages

“There’s a simple rule: You say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and then again and again and again and again, and about the time that you’re absolutely sick of saying it is about the time that your target audience has heard it for the first time.”

—Frank Luntz
Develop key messages

- Prepare for your interview by identifying the key messages that you want to get across
  - Keep them simple. Don’t use jargon. Use examples to support the message.
  - Consider your audience. Who are you trying to reach?
  - Three features of a good key message
    - **Clear** — Free of jargon, devoid of technical language, and relevant
    - **Concise** — Deliver key messages in 7-8 seconds. That might be all the airtime you get
    - **Consistent** — Messages must be repeated if they are to sink in

https://youtu.be/oEhRCTvN1G4
Bridging technique
Public speaking tips & tricks

● Be comfortable — it’s only a conversation!
● Tell your story
● Be informative and honest
  ○ If you don’t know the answer, don’t lie
● Bridge to your key messages
● Avoid jargon and acronyms; use your own language
● Keep eye contact and use your body language
● Be informative
● Practice, practice, practice
  ○ In front of friends
  ○ In front of camera
Bingo time!
Your turn!

Develop key messages

Interview
Following up on your success
Teaching Point 4
Media monitoring

● Follow up with the reporter to provide any additional information
  ○ Questions that you didn’t have the answer for
  ○ Background information on your event, topic

● Keep an eye out
  ○ Local sources
  ○ Syndication

● Professional media monitoring services
  ○ Cision, InfoMart, Gnowit
Google Alerts

- Free
- Takes advantage of Google’s web indexing
- Easy to use
Now what?

- Go out there and practice!
  - Volunteer your services to community organizations or your employer

- Courses and training
  - Ontario colleges offer post-graduate certificates and courses in PR
  - Some universities offer postgraduate diplomas
  - Online courses (i.e., Coursera)

- Work on your public speaking
  - Join a Toastmasters club
Have a great weekend!

roger.reka@utoronto.ca