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Національного університету «Львівська політехніка»

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1671-9261>  
[markiyan.t.prokhasko@lpnu.ua](mailto:markiyan.t.prokhasko@lpnu.ua)

**Markiyan PROKHASKO**  
MA in Journalism,  
PhD student at the Department of Journalism  
and Mass Communication,  
Institute for Law, Psychology, and Innovative Education,  
Lviv Polytechnic National University (Lviv, Ukraine)

## ПОЛЬОВІ МЕТОДИ ТА ВЗАЄМОДІЯ З ЕКСПЕРТАМИ В НАУКОВІЙ ЖУРНАЛІСТИЦІ (АНТАРКТИЧНИЙ КЕЙС-СТАДІ)

### FIELD METHODS AND EXPERT ENGAGEMENT IN SCIENCE JOURNALISM (ANTARCTIC CASE STUDY)

*Актуальність статті обумовлюється зростанням інтересу в українському медіапросторі до наукової журналістики, а також необхідністю висвітлення практичних аспектів роботи журналіста, що пише про науку та популяризує її. В Україні вивченням популяризації науки займається низка дослідників, зокрема: станом популяризації науки в сучасному українському інтернет-просторі; популяризацією наукового контенту в Україні за посередництва помітних науково-популярних видань; тенденціями популяризації наукового знання; історією популяризації науки в Україні періоду незалежності; європейським досвідом популяризації науки через організацію науково-популярних заходів; популяризацією науки в Україні через призму екстремальних умов та викликів, зумовлених війною; засобами популяризації наукового знання у літературному творі; застосуванням цифрових технологій для популяризації наукових здобутків тощо. Метою є розгляд процесу отримання журналістом наукової інформації від науковців і збору репортажного матеріалу для створення науково-популярного контенту. Завданнями статті є розуміння впливу середовища на формування журналістського матеріалу; впливу комунікації між журналістом та науковцем на процес отримання інформації; впливу контексту робочого середовища на занурення в наукову тематику; а також розгляд інструментарію для промоції матеріалів на наукову тематику. Для отримання результатів було застосовано такі методи, зокрема міждисциплінарні: включеного спостереження; експертного опитування; теоретичного абстрагування та узагальнення; аналізу, систематизації та синтезу; описово-аналітичний метод; кейс-стаді та автоетнографічний методи. Розглянуто практичний досвід журналіста під час інтерв'ювання науковців, а також репортерської роботи в середовищі проведення наукових досліджень. Вивчено процес отримання інформації про науку, а також висвітлено розуміння контексту та інструментарію для «перекладу» наукового дискурсу на науково-популярний. Постійна взаємодія з науковцями та робота «у полі» є важливими складовими процесу популяризації наукових знань.*

**Ключові слова:** наукова комунікація, наукова журналістика, популяризація науки, польова журналістика, включене спостереження, науковий сторітелін; антарктичні дослідження.

*The relevance of this study is driven by the interest in science journalism within the Ukrainian media landscape and the need to delineate the practical dimensions of reporting on scientific issues. The dissemination of scientific knowledge in Ukraine has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, focusing on several key areas: the state of popular science in the Ukrainian internet segment; science content trends in prominent popular-science outlets; the history of science popularization in independent Ukraine; European best practices in public engagement; the popularization of science under the extreme conditions and challenges posed by the war; and the integration of digital technologies into the promotion of scientific achievements. The aim of this article is to examine the process of knowledge acquisition by journalists from scientists,*

alongside the gathering of field-report material for popular science content. The specific objectives include analysing the impact of the professional environment on journalistic narrative construction; evaluating the influence of journalist-scientist communication on data gathering; exploring how the “field” context fosters thematic immersion; and assessing the tools for verification and the promotion of science-based media content. The study employs a multidisciplinary methodological framework, including participant observation, expert interviewing, theoretical abstraction and generalization, analysis, systematization, and synthesis. Furthermore, descriptive-analytical, case-study, and autoethnographic methods are utilized to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. The article explores a journalist’s practical experience in interviewing researchers and conducting field reportage within the immediate environment of scientific exploration. It investigates the process of information acquisition and explicates the contextual frameworks and tools required to “translate” complex scientific discourse into an accessible, popular-science format. The results demonstrate that fieldwork and sustained engagement with the scientific community are essential for the effective popularization of knowledge.

**Keywords:** science communication, science journalism, fieldwork in journalism, knowledge dissemination, participant observation, narrative storytelling in science, Antarctic research (case study).

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**I**ntroduction. Science journalism intersects science, mainstream media, and the general public [6, p. 924]. Beyond synthesising literature and secondary sources, journalists engage in field reporting and expert interviews. Analysing science-specific reporting and the nuances of journalist-scientist interaction is increasingly timely, given the burgeoning global interest in the field.

To navigate the modern world, audiences require more than mere updates on emerging technologies; they need to understand their mechanics, societal and economic impacts, and associated risks or benefits. As scientific output accelerates [22, pp. 1–2] and technological landscapes evolve dynamically [3, p. 8], the volume of information continues to surge [21]. Consequently, science journalism emerges as a vital, reliable intermediary. Its primary objective is to popularize knowledge by translating specialized scientific discourse into accessible language [1, p. 15]. Direct communication with experts remains a cornerstone of this information-gathering process.

Science popularization in Ukraine has been addressed by various scholars: T. Bondarenko and A. Diedushkina (online platforms); M. Ivanytska (popular science publications); N. Sholukho (contemporary trends); I. Komashchenko (dissemination of research results); N. Borozdykh (historical perspectives); O. Myronchuk (European event-based models); N. Petrenko (wartime challenges); M. Venhryniuk (literary forms); A. Lytvyniuk (media strategies); and A. Yatsyshyn et al. (digital integration).

### The aim of the research

This study aims to elucidate the practical workflows of science journalists through:

(a) communication with scientists to secure socially significant information;

(b) fieldwork to gather observations that facilitate engaging science communication for a broad audience.

The specific objectives are:

1. To determine how fieldwork shapes scientific narratives and facilitates unique inquiry (*environment*);
2. To highlight the role of preliminary interpersonal rapport in overcoming scientists’ reluctance to engage with media (*communication*)<sup>1</sup>;
3. To analyse how observing research processes enhances the understanding of scientific labor and identifies narrative tools for engaging content (*context*);
4. To explain how field immersion fosters long-term journalist-scientist collaboration for future reporting (*collaboration*);
5. To define how field-based interaction facilitates effective knowledge promotion and public engagement (*promotion*).

### Methodology

The study employs participant observation conducted during an expedition to the Ukrainian Akademik Vernadsky research station in Antarctica and expert interviews with scientists. Theoretical generalization and abstraction were used to isolate core characteristics of communication and fieldwork. Analysis, systematization, and synthesis structured the empirical data, while a descriptive-analytical method integrated existing scholarship. Furthermore, the research utilises case studies from journalistic practice and an autoethnographic method to analyze the firsthand professional experience.

<sup>1</sup> Scientists’ prior negative media experiences often lead to interview reluctance; thus, preliminary rapport-building is essential.

## Results and Discussion

Science journalism addresses the audience's epistemic need to comprehend scientific processes, breakthroughs, and research. Rather than focusing on well-established topics, its mandate is to articulate the “cutting edge” of scientific inquiry [8, p. 4].

Science popularisation, a core function of this field, encompasses a broad strategic spectrum. Enhancing audience engagement involves diversifying genres (interviews, features, explainers) and platforms (legacy media, YouTube, social media, blogs) [16]. Furthermore, multimedia integration — such as online articles augmented by podcasts or books with QR-coded visual assets [19, p. 213] — plays a vital role. Effective contextual framing allows journalists to demonstrate a topic's societal relevance and its connection to the reader's daily life. Fact-checking in this context entails both independent journalistic verification and expert review to ensure technical accuracy. Moreover, promoting scientific content requires a creative approach to reframe stereotypically dry subjects into compelling narratives. Finally, strategic collaboration with specialized media platforms ensures that popularized content reaches its intended target audience.

The central stage of this workflow is the transformation of specialized knowledge into popular science narratives. This process rests on two pillars: *expert communication and fieldwork*. Communication with scientists provides the primary source of data. Fieldwork, defined as reporting conducted beyond the studio or newsroom, involves direct engagement with respondents and events. This immersive approach enables the reporter to capture real-time developments and cross-reference them with expert insights, ensuring a multi-dimensional perspective [2].

In science communication, the “field” encompasses research institutions, observatories, and remote stations. For a science journalist, the ideal environment for knowledge acquisition is direct engagement with scientists within their professional setting. Consequently, this article examines journalist-scientist communication and fieldwork as fundamental pillars of science journalism, using the popularisation of Antarctic research as a primary case study.

Until the late 20th century, Antarctica remained largely enigmatic; some scholars argue it remains less explored than outer space [4]. Given the intense public interest — often juxtaposed with persistent misconceptions, such as “ice wall” myths — rigorous and persistent popularisation is essential. This effort must be grounded in expert interviews

and sustained communication. Furthermore, popularising such a remote region necessitates on-site fieldwork — direct immersion within the Antarctic environment itself.

Science journalism manifests in diverse formats, ranging from long-form features to concise news reports. Currently, industry trends — frequently driven by US-based media — emphasise multidisciplinary collaboration. A salient example is the publication “How We Know Global Warming is Real” [10]. This project involved a diverse team: science writers, data editors, visual specialists, designers, and multimedia editors. Such a collaborative scope far exceeds the capacity of a solo journalist. The material's sophisticated layout and aesthetic design command reader attention while maintaining high scientific standards. By synthesising diverse data — from 19th-century ship logs to Japanese cherry blossom phenology and Alpine glacial retreat (the latter requiring structural reinforcement of a high-altitude observatory) — the authors employ compelling storytelling. They frame climate change as a gripping, high-tension narrative, mirroring the suspense of a disaster film while delivering an empirical, mass-market product.

Expert insights are a cornerstone of science communication, though they need not always take the form of direct quotes. Journalists often synthesize scientific facts, mediating them through their own perspective to resonate with the audience. By integrating historical data, scientific sources, and atmospheric visual storytelling, creators can reframe complex topics — such as climate change — into engaging narratives. Thus, science journalism transcends mere simplification; it encompasses the selection, categorization, structuring, and interpretation of scientific doctrines [11, pp. 265–267].

The popular science book *A Dream About Antarctica* exemplifies this approach to knowledge dissemination. Rooted in empirical practice, the work covers a vast interdisciplinary range: history, climate change, Antarctic law, space research, and various scientific fields (from biology and geology to geophysics and medicine). Consequently, the book employs a hybrid of genres, including personal features, field reports (e.g., covering presidential elections at a polar station), and narrative storytelling regarding Antarctic daily life and connectivity [17].

Each thematic section relies on a triad of methods: archival research, communication with Antarctic researchers, and on-site fieldwork at the Akademik Vernadsky station and the Antarctic Peninsula. For example, a chapter on the evolution of telecommunications — from early expeditions

to the present — synthesizes archival letters and memoirs with contemporary expert interviews. However, the narrative's core is built on personal immersion in an isolated, high-stakes environment where internet access was strictly limited to one hour every two days [5]. The psychological reality of such extreme isolation is nearly impossible to convey through archives or interviews alone; it requires direct journalistic fieldwork to be authentically communicated.

Simultaneously, expert commentary provides technical depth and reduces subjectivity, grounding the narrative in scientific rigor. Nevertheless, audience reception often reveals a preference for the “human” element of science. Representative feedback for *A Dream About Antarctica* highlights this tension:

*“It’s a not-bad book, but at first, it disappointed me greatly. The point is, I had set myself up for a diary of a person who got to Antarctica for the first time. Instead, I received a scientific [book] on history with a bunch of references, dates, last names, and technical details. [...] To my luck, the third part of the book was more about personal experience, so I still got pleasure from the book”* [13].

When a journalist's personal experience is corroborated by multiple scientists and specialists, it transitions from a purely subjective, self-reflective narrative into a grounded, evidence-based account. Consequently, the synthesis of three components — fieldwork, interviewing, and archival research — facilitates a holistic immersion into the subject matter. Notably, unlike the first two methods, archival research is desk-bound and does not inherently require interpersonal communication or physical presence in the field.

In the context of Antarctic popularisation, telecommunications research transcends technical specifications to address the socio-psychological complexities of living in extreme environments, particularly the impact of isolation. While connectivity remains a vital theme, other scientific topics may necessitate a heavier reliance on expert interviews. In such instances, fieldwork serves a supportive yet crucial role, providing the context required to refine inquiry and better comprehend the nuances of on-site scientific labour.

This synergy is exemplified by observing meteorological teams deploying instrumentation on remote islands [14]. Since the Akademik Vernadsky station houses a dedicated observatory, the journalist, acting as an external observer, can investigate the specific objectives and functions of these auxiliary local weather stations. Simultaneously, addressing the audience's affinity for immersive personal narratives, the journalist

can document the experiential dimensions — the maritime transit, the extreme cold, island landings, and iceberg monitoring — alongside the technical calibration of equipment. Thus, the integration of fieldwork and direct expert communication provides the empirical foundation for effective knowledge popularization.

Denys Pishniak, Head of the Department of Atmospheric Physics and Geospace at the National Antarctic Scientific Centre (NASC), explained that local weather stations are placed, for instance, directly by a glacier on a small island to “*track the interaction of air masses forming over the glacier and over the water area in the sea, which may freeze or remain ice-free even in freezing temperatures*”. Direct journalistic participation in equipment deployment immerses the reader in the process, embedding scientific labour into the adventurous narrative arc that appeals to a wide audience [17, pp. 394–403].

Expert testimony is a vital component of such content, following several gradations of interaction. The first is mediated contact (via telephone or telecommunications) to secure supplementary comments for existing research. Such interactions typically yield blog posts, short digital articles, or additions to broader features. Telecommunications also facilitate post-interview follow-ups for clarification and draft verification.

The second gradation is the comprehensive interview conducted within the subject's professional environment. Settings such as laboratories or observatories stimulate professional discourse and provide contextual cues — technical demonstrations or access to specialized literature — that prompt deeper inquiry and expand the project's scope. Notably, in the Antarctic context, both the scientist and the journalist are displaced from their habitual settings into a shared scientific “field”.

The value of participant observation is paramount. Scientists often perceive their routine work as self-evident and may overlook details that would fascinate a lay audience. Conversely, the science journalist identifies these «hooks», translating specialized discourse into popular language. This immersion triggers inquiries that would never occur outside the specific context [15, 27:56].

For example, microbiologists at Akademik Vernadsky station demonstrated their entire workflow: from boat-based water sampling to laboratory filtration and sample preparation. This allows the journalist to describe the process through an experiential lens — capturing the maritime environment, the station's atmosphere,

and the physical labor involved. These narrative elements provide the framework into which scientific knowledge is most effectively woven [18].

However, scientists often feel misrepresented or oversimplified, citing frequent negative media experiences [17, p. 408]. Fieldwork fosters a more direct, collaborative relationship. When a researcher demonstrates their work, offering the draft for authorization (verification) is a crucial trust-building measure, regardless of legal mandates (noting that Ukrainian regulations on joint authorship and mandatory authorization were in effect until 2023) [7]. Proactively establishing this stage of cooperation often makes researchers significantly more willing to engage.

Although recent legislative shifts have made formal authorization optional, establishing a voluntary agreement with respondents remains highly recommended. Such collaboration offers significant advantages: error elimination, factual enrichment, and overall content verification. The primary drawback — potential insistence on overly technical jargon — is outweighed by the benefit of reliability. Authorized content serves as a credible source for knowledge dissemination, as both the journalist and the scientist share accountability for the information's accuracy.

Fieldwork represents the reportage-driven, non-fiction component of science communication, providing the tangible evidence necessary to illustrate abstract scientific concepts. A prominent example is the discourse on global climate change. Public interest often seeks immediate, visible confirmation: “*Is global warming visible in Antarctica?*” However, climate change is a cumulative process, accelerating according to the “hockey stick” principle [9, pp. 783–785]. Such shifts are difficult to perceive during a single month or two, the duration of the season-long expedition to the Akademik Vernadsky station. Just as a drought in the Chernihiv region (Ukraine) is only apparent to those with long-term local memories [20], glacial retreat requires historical comparison rather than snapshots.

Public curiosity reflects an intuitive desire for “visible” facts alongside scientific data. To address this, the research synthesized scientific citations with immersive reportage. One representative case is a geographical feature previously designated as a “point” in nomenclature. For years, it was assumed to be part of the mainland or a larger landmass. However, as the glacier retreated due to warming, this “point” was revealed to be a distinct island [12; 17].

The popularization of Antarctic science utilizes numerous such sketches to ground specialized knowledge. These include immersive reports from:

- sampling boats (plankton collection);
- biological laboratories (sample filtration);
- meteorological and ozone monitoring stations;
- geophysical offices and diving sites (Southern Ocean biodiversity);
- field treks across Galindez Island.

### Conclusions and Prospects

This research demonstrates a practical methodology for on-site science journalism and outlines a strategic communication framework for engaging with scientists to produce popular science content. The study yields the following conclusions: combining fieldwork with direct communication with scientists facilitates deep thematic immersion. An extended presence in a researcher's professional environment provides the dual benefit of securing technical knowledge for comprehensive coverage and gathering narrative “sketches” to frame this data within a broader, more engaging context.

Direct observation of scientific labour allows the journalist to grasp the intricate nuances of the research process. Identifying these unique characteristics is essential for creating vivid, authentic representations of complex topics.

Given the complexity of scientific subjects and the prevalence of researchers' past negative media experiences, establishing interpersonal rapport is a prerequisite for high-quality interviewing. Preliminary socialisation within the scientific *environment* significantly strengthens the “interviewer-respondent” dynamic, leading to more grounded and insightful discourse, effectively immersing the audience into the specific *context*.

Successful initial *communication* and interviewing serve as a foundation for long-term professional collaboration, paving the way for sustained scientific reporting.

Furthermore, advancements in media technology — specifically the democratization of audio and video production — have significantly enhanced the potential of science journalism. Modern multimedia and media convergence allow journalists to more effectively fulfill their role as knowledge brokers, bridging the gap between the scientific community and the public through sophisticated *promotional* strategies.

As the field of science popularisation continues to evolve under the influence of emerging technologies, the study of practical dissemination methods remains highly relevant. This is particularly crucial for the pedagogical development and training of a new generation of science communication specialists.

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