

# Ten Years of CAPjournal: Perspectives from Past Editors

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The end of 2017 marked 10 years of CAPjournal and a new era in the journal's life as it moved to the International Astronomical Union's Office for Public Outreach. To celebrate the journal's past, we interviewed two of the longest serving editors from across this 10-year period to get their insights on the highs and lows of the journal and how it has evolved over the past decade.

## Interview with Pedro Russo

Pedro Russo was the founding editor-in-chief of the journal from 2007 to 2012. Pedro was, at that time, the coordinator for the International Year of Astronomy 2009, he is now the Head of the Astronomy and Society research group at Leiden University, the Netherlands, and also the President of the Commission C.C2 Communicating Astronomy with the Public of the International Astronomical Union.

*Interviewer: It's great to see that CAPjournal has been in print for ten years but it must not have been easy to get everything started. Can you tell us how the original idea for CAPjournal was developed, and what the process has been to get where we are now?*

Pedro: Back in 2007, we were ramping up to the International Year of Astronomy



Figure 1. Pedro Russo. Credit: Pedro Russo

2009; it was clear that there was a need in the community to have a forum for discussion and to present projects, ideas and, most importantly, lessons learned. This was the primary motivation to start a practitioners' journal, like CAPjournal. The main challenge was to convince the community to submit articles: the CAP community is a community of doers, which is great, but it means it is not a community that is used to, or has the time to, write down findings and lessons in the form of articles. This issue still exists, and we are losing a great deal of knowledge that could benefit everyone because of it.

*Interviewer: I know you have very rich experience in science communication and you are also teaching science communication in university now. What are your thoughts on the current situation in the field of astronomy communication, anything you think we can learn from communicators in other science fields?*

Pedro: Science communication has been growing a lot in the last decades; there are plenty of masters programmes, formal training and, most importantly, more awareness of the importance of science communication within the research community. Astronomy has been following that trend, and the number of professionals in astronomy communication is now larger than a couple of decades ago. However, research in astronomy communication is still very limited. Very few research articles are published every year, we see this reflected in CAPjournal, where very few articles are submitted under the 'Research & Applications' section. Even at the CAP conference, we rarely have research presentations. So we need to find ways to incorporate more research into the roles,

impact and approaches in astronomy communication.

*Interviewer: Do you have any further advice for our future authors that might be useful to consider for their research on astronomy communication?*

Pedro: Just write it down! We have an extremely creative and active astronomy communication community (in my opinion, the most active and organised community in science communication), and we need to learn from each other to raise the quality and have a more significant impact in what we do. So I would encourage all CAPjournal readers to publish in the journal.

## Interview with Georgia Bladon

Georgia was editor of CAPjournal from 2013 to 2017. Georgia currently works at a charitable foundation, the Wellcome Trust, as International Engagement Manager, managing the portfolio of work engaging research communities and the wider public with Wellcome's science research across Africa and Asia. Her work focuses on identifying and implementing strategies for ensuring that the interests of non-scientists shape and improve science; that research is developed with cultural and ethical sensitivity; and that science more broadly is recognised as a core and valued part of society and culture. Georgia also works as a freelance science writer for the European Space Agency and other clients.

*Interviewer: You have been the editor-in-chief of the CAPjournal for four years. Can you share with us what the most challenging part of editing the journal is?*

Georgia: One of the best qualities of the journal in my view also brings about one of the core challenges as an editor. That quality is the breadth of articles and authors we have in every issue. We have always sought to make the journal as open and accessible as possible and to encourage submissions from communications and



Figure 2. Georgia Bladon. Credit: Georgia Bladon

science engagement practitioners worldwide who may not usually think to publish in a peer-reviewed journal. As part of this, we make sure not to penalize a submission based on the quality of the written English. In a perfect world, we would have a facility for translation to improve this accessibility even further, but there have never been the funds. So, instead, we take submissions purely on their content and provide a very in-depth English editing service for those authors whose work may not be done justice by their written English. The challenge is to rework a piece so that the work it describes comes through with absolute clarity, but to maintain through it the voice and the flair of the original author. It is time consuming for both editor and author to get this balance right, but extremely satisfying in the end.

Interviewer: What is the most memorable thing about working on CAPjournal?

Georgia: One of the most memorable things about working on CAPjournal, and

one of the things I will miss the most, is the team. I worked remotely, as did our proof-reader, so we rarely found ourselves in the same room, but they are a group I have worked with for many years and their commitment and hard work are unrivalled. In addition, the amount I have learnt from working with dozens of authors and peer reviewers over the years will certainly stay with me. There is such a rich landscape of work going on in astronomy communication, and every issue brought new surprises and nuggets of knowledge.

Interviewer: In 2016, the CAPjournal published a special issue on the Rosetta mission; this was a great collection of papers. How did it happen?

Georgia: This was probably the most rewarding, and challenging, issue from my years as editor. It came about as the brainchild of Karen O'Flaherty from ESA who approached me in September 2015 asking whether we might consider a special issue. Karen and the communications team at ESA were keen to capture the vast amounts of work, and learning, from the Rosetta mission's communication campaign, and CAPjournal provided an obvious platform. I thought it was a great idea. Rosetta captured the world, and I had no doubt our readership of astronomy communication enthusiasts would be keen to hear how. What followed were months of hard work, and a lot of learning of my own. We had a wide range of authors from within and outside of ESA, and because this was an exposé of ESA's inner workings, it had to satisfy the needs not only of those authors but also the relevant senior managers of the organisation. There was a delicate bal-

ance to achieve between exposing the times when things had not gone to plan, often the most valuable reflections, while also highlighting the overall success of the campaign. Then there was the controversial 'Shirtgate' and how to handle it in a way that reflected both sides of the heated debate, without letting a single moment dwarf the rest of the campaign. And, lastly, there were two communications teams with two different style guides, resulting in a fair few debates over italics and grammar — a passion for which is common to most of us communication geeks. I'm not going to lie, not everyone saw eye to eye on many of these issues, and there were changes, compromises and tweaks all along the way, but the process of getting there was respectful and rewarding, and the result, something we could all be proud of. I'd do it again in a heartbeat.



Figure 3. Cover images of CAPjournal since the first issue, with an enlarged image from the Rosetta Special Issue. Credit: CAPjournal