
Letter

The Sci21 webcast project – a voice for science communication in the southern hemisphere

Editor

The enthusiasm and appetite for science shown by the New Zealand public and the media never fails to impress me, and this is a major motivational force for my involvement in science communication.

Last year I scripted and filmed a ‘Science of Christmas’ video with my friend and colleague Allan Blackman. The short video attracted over 100,000 views on YouTube in just one month over the Christmas period, and opened my eyes to the power of online video content. This experience, and my enthusiasm to spark even more widespread interest in the role of science in our daily lives, led me to create the Sci21 webcast platform that went live in August this year.

The Sci21 project* aims to showcase science that will transform the way we live during the coming century. It is intended to be forward looking and thought provoking, and is also a means of tangibly addressing the equity issues we face in science where gender and ethnicity are concerned.

I set out to create short, impactful videos by charismatic scientists, and fortunately there is no shortage of these in New Zealand. The first videos are live online and feature me talking about astrobiology, Michelle Dickinson on nanotechnology, and

Duncan Babbage on personalised medicine. Future speakers include experts on topics as diverse as photonics, ocean health, and emerging infectious diseases.

Since launching Sci21, I have also been approached by a huge number of emerging science communicators who are keen to be involved, so I now plan to make a series of videos specifically designed to showcase and support first-time communicators. This highlights the powerful mentorship and empowerment role that the Sci21 project has assumed.

The project has a strong focus on New Zealand talent, but I have also secured some funding to bring in overseas speakers. I have intentionally targeted high-profile scientists from the southern hemisphere, because I believe we offer a unique perspective compared to the overwhelmingly American and European science media offerings online.

My vision is for Sci21 to become the ‘go to’ site for anyone who is curious about the cutting edge of science, be they adults or children, and I actively encourage use of the videos in schools. I hope the Sci21 videos will become launch pads for discussion of science topics, both in the classroom and in our communities.

Steve Pointing

Auckland University of Technology,
Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142
steve.pointing@aut.ac.nz

*Sci21 website, <http://sci21.co.nz>