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Baron, N. (2010). *Escape from the Ivory Tower: A Guide to Making Your Science Matter*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Review by Michel M. Haigh

Escape from the Ivory Tower: A Guide to Making Your Science Matter explores how scientists can promote their research. This hands-on book, however, can also help students, faculty members, and Extension specialists become more comfortable working with the media. Nancy Baron, the lead communications trainer for the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS) and the Leopold Leadership Program, has written a "how to" guide so scientists can understand how to promote their research and make it matter. It is often challenging to work with the media; this book can prepare individuals to do so. Baron answers the question, "How do you reach beyond your research circles to communicate what you are observing to the wider world—why it matters, the potential risks, the possible solutions?" *(p. 5)*.

The book and its online resources can help readers improve their media relations skills. It provides step-by-step instructions. It is easy to read and well-organized. The book's case studies of scientists, journalists, and policy experts apply the content to "real world" situations.

Baron organizes the book in four parts. The first section is an introduction explaining why it is important for scientists to disseminate their research findings. Different cultures (e.g., media culture and policy culture) that a scientist should be aware of are discussed in the second section. The third section is the "how-to toolkit." The fourth section discusses how scientists can be agents of change once their research findings have been disseminated. An overview of each chapter follows.

Part I

Chapter 1, the introduction, outlines the purpose of the book. Baron discusses why science is important. She challenges the reader to have an open mind when working with the media. Explaining the importance of research in a direct way will keep the public interested.

In Chapter 2 Baron discusses why researchers would *want* to communicate their findings. One reason is to inform the public and policymakers. Another reason is to "enhance your stature and reputation among your peers and with your students" *(p. 14)*.

Still another reason is to fulfill a requirement. For example, the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health ask for an outreach and public communications plan when researchers apply for grants. The chapter does a good job of arguing the case for disseminating research findings beyond the "ivory tower."

Part II

Journalistic and scientific cultures are discussed in Part II, Chapters 3–7. Chapter 3 gives practical advice on how to work with journalists. Whereas scientists are trained to (1) provide the background, (2) present methods, and (3) report the results. Journalists want the bottom line first, so research findings and their importance need to be communicated briefly, with minimal use of jargon and acronyms. In other words, keep it simple. Neither journalists nor their audiences have time to read through pages of information to find "why is this important."

In Chapter 4, Baron discusses what makes a good science story. A good science story should be novel, show the passion of the researcher, and discuss the mystery of the research process. Baron also explores the importance of audience. Scientists need to be aware of how various media target different audiences. Researchers must tailor their message to the audience.

Chapter 5 is an insightful chapter examining why and how media has changed over time. Baron discusses the traditional business model of the media; new forms of media, including blogs and social networking; and strategies for better understanding how and where to disseminate research findings.

In Chapters 6 and 7, Baron compares scientists who ask, "How does the world work?" to policymakers who ask, "What should we do?" She reflects on the misperceptions scientists have of policymakers, and those that policymakers have of scientists.

Overall, the chapters in Part II take the mystery out of communicating with journalists and policymakers. Though this book is intended for scientists, anyone who needs to promote their organization, research, or policy agenda would benefit from the information provided.

Part III

Part III, Chapters 8–13, is a "how-to" toolkit, which is a handy guide on how to communicate. Chapter 8 discusses delivering a clear, concise message. The "so what" is the most important thing

to remember. Journalists and the public need to know why the "so what" is important to them. The "so what" can also change based on the audience.

In Chapter 8, Baron also introduces a helpful tool called the message box. The message box tool can help researchers explain to nonscientists what they do; prepare for interviews; prepare a 30-second elevator speech about a project; polish an abstract or cover letter; write an op-ed (opposite the editorial page) or news release; and prepare a story for a website. In short, the chapter is extremely helpful for those with little or no experience in media relations.

Chapter 9 helps readers prepare for interviews. Baron gives pre-interview, during-the-interview, and post-interview tips. She also provides a list of do's and don'ts. Examples of the "do's" include being accessible and responsive, knowing how to sum up a message in a sentence, interacting with interviewers, choosing words carefully, and being ready to answer everything. The "don'ts" include not saying "no comment" and not sweating the "small stuff."

The importance of interviewing is revisited in Chapter 10 when Baron illuminates distinctions between broadcast media and print media. She suggests proactive approaches scientists can use to get their story "out there." Instead of waiting to be contacted, scientists can send out news releases, write op-eds or letters-to-the-editor, blog, or pitch stories to journalists. The chapter gives "do's" and "don'ts" for writing for different media types. There are also resources available online for readers to hone their skills (found at www.escapefromtheivorytower.com/resources). Chapters 12 and 13 provide step-by-step instructions on how to promote research and work with policymakers. Overall, the tools and information provided in Part III would be helpful to any reader, not just scientists.

Part IV

The final chapters, 14 and 15 (Part IV), provide readers with an understanding of how important it is to be an agent of change. Baron believes scientists should remember the four Ps: *prepare* to disseminate a message that is articulate, to the point, and easy to understand; *practice* presenting key points; deliver the right message to the right audience to achieve *persuasion*; and deliver messages with *passion*.

The strengths of this book include the writing style, the use of case studies, the use of "real world" examples, and the supplemental

online resources. Baron takes the mystery out of media relations. She has written a "must have" reference book that is accessible to a variety of audiences.

About the Reviewer

Michel M. Haigh is an associate professor in the College of Communications at The Pennsylvania State University. Her previous work experience includes working for an Extension communications service unit as a writer and editor. Haigh's research is in the areas of media effects and strategic communication. She earned her bachelor's degrees from South Dakota State University, her master's degree from Texas Tech University, and her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma.

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