



## **WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

One of the most important jobs to do, in preparation for an event, is to get the message out. You need to let your public know what you are doing. More than just the general public can be interested in what you have planned: Local Section members, science teachers in the local school boards, members of the local business community are all potential targets.

### **The Media**

Media relations are an area that does not just begin with **International Year of Chemistry (IYC)**. It needs to be handled on a constant and continual basis. Once contact with the media has been established, keep it going. Send out announcements of all Local Section activities, especially anything involving children or students. Award nights are good, for example. The media, particularly newspapers and television, like pictures.

When you are trying to get media to cover some of your activities, remember that IYC is not necessarily a "news" item, but more of a public awareness exercise. Aim at getting coverage in your community newspapers, on your local television channel and cable television. Major ones attend if other news is slow that day.

### **Whom to Contact**

Most Local Sections are located close to a university or college that may, or may not, have a public relations or communications office. If so, ask for a copy of its media list. Often, the office can be of assistance to you in other areas: helping to write press releases, making telephone calls, sending out media kits.

If you need to prepare a media list from scratch, the first step is to use the web or a telephone book to find the addresses and telephone numbers of the local radio, television and newspapers. Don't forget to add the cable TV company and any weekly or community newspapers. Another possibility is the Canadian Press news service. There are branches all across the country and it is possible for a story to be picked up all over Canada.

Once this has been done, take the time to call and find out the name of the city or news editor. Check to see if there is a science reporter, an environmental reporter or a medical reporter and ask whom that person is. Whenever possible start with the reporter first.

Then add to the list any radio or TV talk shows that are community oriented. In these cases, the person you want is the producer.

There is also the **Canadian Science Writers Association**. Members are spread all across Canada and there are probably several members in your area. If you are interested in finding out more about the CSWA and the names of members you can get in touch with, contact CSWA, Box P.O. Box 75, Station A, Toronto ON M5W 1A2; Tel/Fax: 1-800-796-8595; E-mail: [office@sciencewriters.ca](mailto:office@sciencewriters.ca) or visit <http://www.sciencewriters.ca/>

## **How to Make Contact**

The most familiar way of getting your point across is through the news release. Please see **Writing a Press Release**.

## **The Hook**

One way of bringing attention to IYC is to propose a special event or activity (a hook) that will be carried out during the year and then continued on. In 1989, York University came up with the idea of a Chemical Hall of Fame. Not only did it bring **National Chemistry Week** to the public's attention, it gave attention and media coverage to chemicals whose beneficial contributions may be overlooked.

## **Timing**

It is never too early to start making contact with the media. As soon as possible, prepare a press release announcing your event in your area and some of the activities you have planned. It is also a good idea to give some background on the event, including what happened last year, if it is an annual event. You can even call the media before sending this initial press release so that they are aware of what is being sent and you will know about that particular person's level of interest.

Send a reminder, giving any additional information that has become available. Two weeks before the event, send out a final press release, giving all the information available. If your press release is sent too early, it tends to get filed away or be discarded. Follow it up with an e-mail or telephone call just days before the event as a final reminder. A telephone follow-up to your mailings ensures that the appropriate person has received your information and that it has the intended effect - actual coverage. See the information on **How to Write a Press Release**.

Be prepared to answer questions about technical subjects in a non-technical manner. As much as possible avoid jargon: if a technical term must be used, take care to explain what it means and why you have to use it.

If a talk is to be given during **IYC**, you have the option of sending a copy with the press release or asking the media to let you know if they want a copy. On a cost basis, the latter course is preferable but makes the whole process as easy as possible for the press. They will appreciate it. It's a good idea to see if the speaker will give press interviews before or after the speech.

If possible, contact all the local media about one to two weeks before the event to see if they still have the material you sent them, if they need more information and whether or not someone will be attending.

Today, the use of electronic media is one of the most effective methods of spreading the word about your event. Websites such as Facebook, Twitter or Kijiji offer free advertising opportunities that are quick and incredibly simple to set up. These convenient and effective types of sites enable your ad to reach a broad audience, with as much or as little information on your event as you would like. With the Internet at the fingertips of people of all ages, electronic media has quickly become the main means of successful promotion, and should not be underestimated when thinking about your event.

Television is another effective method to get your message across. Getting a short news item on the six o'clock news can provide a lot of exposure. Television producers and editors are particularly fond of a story with pictures: anything involving children, local dignitaries and a visual display with impressive special effects.

When thinking about television, don't forget your local cable company. Not only are they usually interested in community events, but they frequently need all the programming help they can get.