

# Strategies for the public communication of eclipses

P. S. Bretones

Departamento de Metodologia de Ensino/UFSCar, Brazil email: [bretones@ufscar.br](mailto:bretones@ufscar.br)

Eclipses are among the celestial events that draw the attention of the public. This paper discusses strategies for using eclipses as public communication opportunities in the media. It discusses the impact of articles written by the author and analysis of published material for 25 observed eclipses over the last 30 years by mass media in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. On each occasion, a standard article was posted on the Internet and sent to newspapers, radio and TV with information, such as: date, time and local circumstances; type of the eclipse; area of visibility; explanation; diagram of the phenomenon, and the Moon's path through Earth's shadow; eclipses in history; techniques of observation; getting photographs; place and event for public observation. Over the years, direct contact was maintained with the media and journalists by the press offices of the institutions.

The importance and methodology of the evaluation of newspaper articles about astronomy are mentioned by Fonseca *et al.* (*CAPjournal*, **8**, 27–29). The Budd score (*Journalism Quarterly*, **41**, 259–262) gives a news play measure, within the newspaper context. The most important information is presented in the title and first paragraph. The following information is considered less important in the inverted pyramid model. Evaluating the articles and studying the focus given by journalists indicates aspects considered to be more important for communication with the public. It was analyzed the approach taken by journalists using the sent material in the published articles about titles and images. Were published and analyzed 19 articles signed by the author (credited) and 71 articles not signed by the author (uncredited). The most used titles refer to the date and time of the phenomenon and place of event for public observations and the most common images of the eclipsed Moon and photo of the author. It is also discussed the interviews for TVs (14) and radios (15) about: the need for availability for interviews, inside or outside the studios, before, during, and after the events given the extensive agenda of the reporters. Frequently asked questions refer to the time, the place of observation, use of instruments, appearance of Sun and Moon during the event and eye safety.

In conclusion, sending articles on eclipses to the media have a high yield in publications being a “hot” subject. The publication or dissemination depended on the time of the phenomenon, the day of the week and events for public observation. The titles, illustrations and approaches indicate a trend to inform directly the date and time of the event and the use of images of the eclipsed object. Sending material to news agencies of great newspapers allow the spread of news to more distant places nationwide using of the Internet in order to make the best use of new media. Finally, it is important to be available for interviews.

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