Chemistry in Primetime and Online: Communicating Chemistry in Informal Environments

Tina Masciangioli, Chemical Sciences Roundtable, Board on Chemical Sciences and Technology, Division on Earth and Life Studies, National Research Council

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It is critical that we increase public knowledge and understanding of science and technology issues through formal and informal learning for the United States to maintain its competitive edge in today's global economy. Since most Americans learn about science outside of school, we must take advantage of opportunities to present chemistry content on television, the Internet, in museums, and in other informal educational settings.

In May 2010, the National Academies' Chemical Sciences Roundtable held a workshop to examine how the public obtains scientific information informally and to discuss methods that chemists can use to improve and expand efforts to reach a general, nontechnical audience. Workshop participants included chemical practitioners (e.g., graduate students, postdocs, professors, administrators); experts on informal learning; public and private funding organizations; science writers, bloggers, publishers, and university communications officers; and television and Internet content producers. *Chemistry in Primetime and Online* is a factual summary of what occurred in that workshop.

Chemistry in Primetime and Online examines science content, especially chemistry, in various informal educational settings. It explores means of measuring recognition and retention of the information presented in various media formats and settings. Although the report does not provide any conclusions or recommendations about needs and future directions, it does discuss the need for chemists to connect more with professional writers, artists, or videographers, who know how to communicate with and interest general audiences. It also emphasizes the importance of formal education in setting the stage for informal interactions with chemistry and chemists.

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