



Clarity in comms

Tips for effective writing

Cassandra Cavallaro – SKAO Content and Media Lead

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The goal

- To provide a simple framework and a few tips to help your writing

Remember:

- There are many different approaches to writing
- Other approaches are not wrong – creativity is good!



Let's discuss!

- How do you approach writing currently?
- What are some of the things you struggle with?



Step one: What is the story?



Before getting started

- What is the story?
 - Identify the **primary focus**, and sum it up
 - “A new piece of technology has been used to do X for the first time.”
 - “A team has won an award for successfully doing X.”
- Why are we writing this now?
 - Is it new, timely and/or strategically important?
- Which points do we need to make?
 - E.g. story is about a new member country, but also needs to include references to human capital development, industrial contracts



Step two: Know your audience



Audience is key

- Who is this piece aimed at?
 - General public, specialists, children, decision makers, staff...
- What are we trying to convey to them?
- Do they have prior knowledge?

Now we know **what** we want to communicate and **who** are audience is, we can...



Pick a product

- Decide **how** to cover the story
 - Type of product: news / media release; feature article, social media posts, internal newsletter etc.
 - Style to best engage the audience: formal announcement, short news piece, chatty/informal piece, interview, Q&A
 - Level of detail required



Step three: Identify your constraints



Planning your article

- What's your deadline?
- What's your word count?
- How much do you need to research?
- Who do you need to speak to and how long will that take?
- Approvals/editorial process



Step four: Make a plan



Get organised

- To write about something, you have to understand it first.
- Gather everything you already have (briefing documents, news articles, prior interviews etc.)
- Read it and identify the parts relevant for your piece.
- Note down anything you don't understand.
- Identify where the gaps are.



Make a plan

- Sketch out the content
- Think like a reader:
 - What do you want to know?
 - Get to the point!
 - Elements to make it more engaging
 - Explained at right level
 - An appropriate length

Background info gathered: Video interview with a scientist, previous stories on milestones, quote from director-general, information on how the telescopes work, info on partners who are building the antennas.

Planning

Summary line: The SKAO has installed its first antennas in Australia

Intro info: More info on what's happened: e.g. who, what, where, when.

Context: Brief background to explain this milestone

Quote from someone: Director-General?

Context: What happens next?

Quote from someone else: Telescope director?



Step five: Start writing



Turning the plan into an article

- What is the story? This is your introduction line:

"The SKA-Low telescope has begun to take shape in Western Australia with the installation of the first antennas on site today, marking a major construction milestone for the SKAO."

- The next paragraph should expand on this introduction:

"They are the first of the 131,072 two-metre-tall, Christmas tree-shaped antennas that will make up the radio telescope at Inyarrimanha Ilgari Bundara, the CSIRO Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory, on Wajarri Country."

- Keep going!



Example 1

COSMIC REBELS BREAK THE RULES OF GALAXY FORMATION

Researchers have discovered the most distant Milky-Way-like galaxy yet observed.

Dubbed REBELS-25, this disc galaxy seems as orderly as present-day galaxies, but we see it as it was when the Universe was only 700 million years old. This is surprising since, according to our current understanding of galaxy formation, such early galaxies are expected to appear more chaotic.



Example 2

CPS Advocates for
International Radio
Astronomy Protection from
Satellite Interference



The radio astronomy community takes a major step as proposals to add satellite constellation interference to the agenda of 2027 World Radiocommunication Conference are put forward.

The African Telecommunications Union ([ATU](#)) and the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations ([CEPT](#)) have formally proposed new agenda items for the upcoming 2027 World Radiocommunication Conference ([WRC-27](#)). ATU and CEPT represent the telecommunication agencies in Africa and Europe. The proposals go back to major efforts of the IAU Centre for the Protection of the Dark and Quiet Sky from Satellite Constellation Interference ([CPS](#)). Its members, in particular the European Science Foundation's Committee on Radio Astronomy Frequencies ([CRAF](#)) [1], South African Radio Astronomy Observatory ([SARAO](#)) and CPS co-host SKA Observatory ([SKAO](#)) have been advocating for improved protection of radio astronomy from the negative effects of satellite constellations for years.



More creative options

- Opening with a quote can set the tone for a piece
- Pinning a feature to a recent external event to highlight relevance
- Don't be afraid of a pun!

Let's talk about... solar physics

Solar missions are very hot right now. In March, the ESA- NASA Solar Orbiter made its first near fly-bys, around 48 million km from the Sun, inside the orbit of Mercury. Equipped with multiple imaging instruments, it is creating the closest images ever of the Sun's surface.

“You can feel the excitement in the room!” Dr Shari Breen is surveying a packed venue at the start of a full-day side event at the IAU General Assembly, titled The SKA Observatory, a universe of possibilities.

As the SKAO's head of science operations, she has spearheaded the effort to bring together, in person, 18 speakers from across the Observatory and several of its partner organisations.



Adding “colour”

- Quotes, analogies, interesting facts, quirky details make a piece more memorable and more engaging.
- Quotes
 - opportunity to be inclusive
 - add gravity/enable you to say things that would sound odd otherwise
 - should **enhance** your text, not just repeat it.

"Turning LOFAR back up and seeing these booming signals from these new generation of V2 Mini SpaceX satellites was a bit shocking," says Prof Dempsey.

"This is actually threatening the entirety of ground based astronomy in every wavelength and in different ways. If it continues, without the sort of mitigation to make these satellites quiet, then it does become an existential threat for the kinds of astronomy we do," Prof Dempsey added.



Analogies/comparisons

“When viewed from Earth, the eruption from Centaurus A now extends eight degrees across the sky—the length of **16 full Moons laid side by side.**”



Tips to remember

- Remember: aim is to convey information in an **engaging** way.
- Be disciplined - be concise, clear and **economical** with your words.
- Context helps to explain the significance of the story.
- Keep in mind what you are trying to achieve with the piece – how does each element support that?
- **Write the headline last.** You'll be able to use the article content for inspiration.



Nuance

- Consider not only what you're trying to say, but how it might be received.
- A subtle change in language can make a big difference:
 - "Contractors are **still working** on infrastructure" versus
 - "Contractors are **continuing to work** on infrastructure" / "Work is underway"



Exercise: let's write!

- Think of a news story
- Think about who your audience will be
- Pick a product: media release/feature article etc.
- Write the headline, introduction and first paragraph
- Plan what else you would include in the body of the text



Dealing with challenges

- Many hands make... messy work
- Ask people to comment promptly
- Ensure they don't remove the good stuff!
- Be sure to do a final review for style, repetition etc
- Don't be **too** precious about your writing
- Have a style guide to back you up
- Keep writing – it will get easier!



Thank you for taking part!

*We recognise and acknowledge the
Indigenous peoples and cultures that have
traditionally lived on the lands on which
our facilities are located.*

SKAO

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