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Why the New York Times Science Tuesday section is only eight pages and what to do about it

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Communicating science to the public is the responsibility of all scientists and necessary for an informed electorate and as an inspiration to young minds. Yet successful national strategies for communicating science and the venues for such communication seem limited. Science museums and TV programs like NOVA reach millions of people but still only a very small fraction of the US population. In terms of daily science reporting very few newspapers have a devoted science reporter and it is only the New York Times which has a significant weekly reporting section on science (and health). What can one do about reaching wider and new audiences? We recently ran an NSF sponsored international conference entitled Communicating Science to the Public through the Performing Arts (www.sciartconference2010.com). At the conference there were sessions on science and theater, science and TV and film, science and dance, science and music and science festivals, cafes and events (web.gc.cuny.edu/sciart). Using these new approaches one can reach a new and wider audience and one can also take advantage of the seemingly insatiable interest of the press in the arts. Examples of successful new strategies for communicating science will be presented, evaluated and shown to be replicable at a relatively modest cost of time and money.