



## Welcome to 2024: issues and trends occupying JCOM this year

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**Abstract**

As we usher in 2024, we highlight some of the issues and trends that are occupying JCOM, and the fields of science communication and academic publishing more generally.

**Keywords**

Science and media

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**The imperative for Open Access**

Open Access continues to be one of the most positive and significant shifts in academic publishing, and JCOM continues to be the only Diamond Open Access journal devoted to furthering the field of science communication research and practice. The traditional academic publishing model, where research is locked behind paywalls, is increasingly seen as outdated. JCOM continues to support making research available to audiences beyond academia and ensuring that research knowledge can contribute to the public good and fuel positive innovation in practice. As JCOM grows, we are putting efforts into identifying funding opportunities to ensure JCOM's sustainability without placing undue financial burden on researchers and science communication practitioners, particularly those from non-research-intensive organisations or regions with limited funding to support publishing efforts.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion**

Science communication and academic publishing communities share common concerns with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which means ensuring that diverse voices within the community are represented and heard, and addressing systemic biases that exist in the publication process. Ensuring that research findings are communicated in ways that are inclusive and resonate with diverse audiences remains a critical goal for JCOM. The journal promotes diversity through its editorial board membership and peer review processes, and we

particularly encourage submissions from researchers and practitioners in regions where science communication has limited recognition. A special issue of JCOM focused on 'science communication and social justice' is in the pipeline for mid-2024. This special issue, edited by Emily Dawson, Simon Lock and Mehita Iqani, explores science communication and public engagement via the relationships between social justice, power and publics in a range of cultural, political and socio-economic contexts.

### **Ethical considerations in a digital and automated world**

The digital transformation of science communication has brought new ethical challenges including data privacy considerations, the potential to amplify biases, and the appropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in research and research dissemination. Effective science communication can require active engagement on digital platforms where misunderstandings and misinformation also spread. Online engagement can come at a substantial cost for communicators where content moderation policies may be lacking or limited. Generative AI tools can automate many of the steps involved in tailoring online content for various audiences e.g. converting the content of peer reviewed articles into visual abstracts, blog posts and social media posts. Academic publishers and learned societies are also debating the roles for Generative AI in the research process. It is crucial that ethical guidelines for science communication and academic publishing evolve in line with technological advancements and ensure that these fields are leveraging the benefits of digital platforms and AI tools responsibly, and with integrity and authenticity. We have two special issues coming out in 2024 that address many of these emerging issues, one on public (dis)trust in science in digital media environments and one on science communication in the age of artificial intelligence.

### **Collaboration across disciplines and borders**

Finally, the interconnected nature of the many global challenges we face requires collaborative approaches to science communication and publishing. Multidisciplinary research that crosses traditional academic boundaries is the norm for science communication. International collaboration is also vital for addressing global issues and we welcome research and practice submissions to JCOM taking these perspectives. Our first special issue for 2024 addresses an issue that continues to be significant for science communication: the connections between research and practice. Edited by Lillian Fischer, Andreas Scheu, Germana Barata, Robert Inglis and Ricarda Ziegler, this special issue presents a collection of contributions focussed on how science communication researchers and practitioners can collaborate more effectively and sustainably.

We take this opportunity to thank the SISSA Medialab Editorial Office, JCOM's Editorial Board members and our dedicated group of peer reviewers for ensuring the quality of the work published in JCOM. We also thank JCOM's contributors for their work in advancing knowledge, informing policy, and inspiring public engagement with science for many years to come.

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JCOM Editor

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