

Comment

JCOM — FIVE YEARS IN THE FUTURE

Seven memos for the next JCOM

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ABSTRACT: Throughout its existence JCOM has earned a special recognition as a space of confluence for the international community of science communicators, but how should be its immediate future? Here are some ideas inspired by which Italo Calvino's suggested as the main characteristics for the literature of the 21st century, hoping to have a JCOM light, rapid, accurate, visible, multiple, consistent and comprehensive.

To response to the generous invitation to imagine the immediate future of our Journal of Science Communication (JCOM), it is necessary to recognize that — since several years ago — JCOM has earned a place among the major publications we consulted to improve our work, and also represents where we meet our colleagues, the common to have our best conversations. I also need to remember the origin of the verb «to imagine», related to the Latin voice *imitari*. So we can say that the imagination has a lot to see with «imitate» a real figure, but transforming it.

So, we can imagine the next few years' future of JCOM looking at its present and suggesting that it must to be transformed around to its readers, who are the real reason for its existence. I would like a JCOM making a commitment to read and readers. I would like a journal as a symbol of a great moment of reading as exciting, enjoyable and challenging to enable one or more re-readings, involving articles that are likely to be used in my daily work as a communicator of science and texts that encourage reflection about science as one of the essential elements of culture, reviewing both the results of scientific research as well as social attitudes toward science. This requires a JCOM as an implementation of its contents, a truly example of the richness that characterizes scientific communication recreating science through metaphors, models and images.

There is a work by Italo Calvino that has been cited over and over again but now is relevant, if we have in mind that the fabulous Italian writer was greatly interested in science: *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*, which is a defence of the main features that literature should be kept in the immediate future, according to him: Lightness, Quickness, exactitude, Visibility, Multiplicity and Consistency.

I would like to imagine the future of JCOM accompanied by Calvino, and adding a new one element: Integration.

«The only true voyage of discovery»

Lightness: incorporate the sense of humour into the overall approach of JCOM; humour as a dimension of intelligence when communicating science, as a key element to promote a cheerful and evocative science communication.

Quickness: make JCOM a bi-monthly journal. In the same vein, jcom.sissa.it needs to be more dynamic and serve as a great library organized by topic and also proposing suggested *reading routes* for related concepts;

Exactitude: expand existing sections (Editorial, Articles, Comments, Reviews, Letters and Focus) to differentiate those works that represent experiences already done from theoretical proposals, or even separate strategies of science communication according to their «places» (museums, magazines, multimedia, etc.) and audiences (children, teenagers, etc.);

Visibility: include on each article links to other texts published previously and related thematically in order to continue the conversation;

Multiplicity: generate a whole visual strategy for JCOM, which not only serves to accompany the texts, but too represents itself an exercise in science communication by meanings of: illustration, comics, photography... And for jcom.sissa.it create a new section for incorporating «oral columns»: short videos in which one author or collaborator make use of the spoken word to develop his theme (looking to be placed in different languages with English subtitles);

Consistency: adding to JCOM a series of thematic fixed sections that address the interests of greater demand among the journal readers. A staff member should be take care of each section, inviting different authors to participate;

Integration: conceive every issue of JCOM as a whole piece of communication that integrates the visual with the written and respecting a high aesthetic level, preserving the possibility to download individual articles, but ensuring that each issue of JCOM provides a moment of memorable reading — an inexhaustible source of findings — in line with the wishes of Marcel Proust: «The only true voyage of discovery would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes».

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