

# PREFACE

In 2020, one can hear the provocation that ‘science is a human right’ ring louder and louder.<sup>1</sup> At first, such an assertion seems overblown; among the human rights to which we aspire—equality, freedom from poverty, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly—‘the right to science’ seems quite far down the list of priorities. And yet, we find ourselves in the midst of so many problems where science might offer at least partial solutions—and understanding science also may help us avoid more of the problems science has already caused. Access to science and its benefits and opportunities is uneven across the world—as is the production of scientific knowledge. Further, the gains of scientific knowledge have been concentrated in wealthy regions of the globe while the costs of producing scientific knowledge and its application have been pushed to poorer regions. Better access to science, then, even in a modest way through science communication, has been one response to this inequality. At the Australian National Centre for Public Awareness of Science at The Australian National University (ANU), our mission for over 30 years has been to foster the ‘democratic ownership of science’. So, cataloguing stories of science communication from all over the world, beginning to account for the ways that science is and could be accessible to more people as well as the ways in which scientific knowledge is held to account, is an important part of our goal. We have been proud to support the project that has produced this fine volume.

But this is a beginning.<sup>2</sup> And the word ‘beginning’ is an important one; the goal of this volume was not to produce myriad ‘origin stories’ of science communication (in Australia, this would be a 60,000-year-old history of Indigenous Australians sharing knowledge), but to explore the beginning of a more recent, 20th-century common project that is being realised in multiple ways around the globe. In some countries like Australia from where I write, science communication is an academic and professional activity with government support that waxes and wanes. In other places, science

---

1 For example, by Shabaz Khan in a seminar he gave at the Centre for the Public Awareness of Science at ANU: [cpas.anu.edu.au/news-events/events/lunchtime-seminar-professor-shahbaz-khan-director-unesco-regional-science-bureau](https://cpas.anu.edu.au/news-events/events/lunchtime-seminar-professor-shahbaz-khan-director-unesco-regional-science-bureau).

2 See Edward Said (1985). *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Columbia University Press.

communication is a form of activism; in still others, it is seen as part of science itself. Sometimes the goal of science communication is education, other times it is a way of sharing the creation of knowledge and yet other times science communication is about addressing items of concern—health, climate, environment, technology. And so, a beginning is a messy thing that struggles to contain all the different possibilities that a story can tell. This volume celebrates that with a proliferation of terminology, goals and aims—and the authors, while lucid, sophisticated and bringing substantial analytic skills to bear, also acknowledge a glorious mess that is science communication as it evolves from its 20th-century beginnings.

Finally, a note on methods. In some parts of the world, including Australia, empirical methods in science communication thrive and, for the most part, this is a happy advancement of the field. However, the methods of history, also empirical—of collecting evidence in an archive of sorts, of telling stories and gathering a corpus that will guide future work—are needed now more than ever. This volume, we hope, contributes to this. It brings together a corpus of stories from around the world that will be shared to provide impetus for more stories, different stories, contestation and, of course, other forms of work.

Professor Joan Leach  
Director, Australian National Centre for Public Awareness of Science  
The Australian National University  
Canberra, Australia

This text is taken from *Communicating Science: A Global Perspective*,  
edited by Toss Gascoigne, Bernard Schiele, Joan Leach, Michelle  
Riedlinger, Bruce V. Lewenstein, Luisa Massarani and Peter Broks,  
published 2020 by ANU Press, The Australian National University,  
Canberra, Australia.