

**Von:** Science & Video science\_and\_video@spektrum.de  
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**An:** noa@hgmedien.com

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»Science & Video« – Science Communication Newsletter #12, August 2020  
Here you will get to the web version.

Hi everyone,

this newsletter has been quarantined for a couple of months, but now it's back to life. For its twelfth edition we found scientific evidence about which type of video protagonists can inspire trust. We have some (slightly relieving) news on YouTube filter bubbles. And we learned how scientific institutions think about videos as a tool to communicate science.

At the end, we'll invite you to dance!

And most importantly: Thank you for two years of great support, »[Spektrum der Wissenschaft](#)«! We take it from here on our own.

Thilo Körkel, Kerstin Hoppenhaus and Sibylle Grunze

## What's going on

### Whom do audiences of online lectures trust?

On the internet it's mostly up to the users to check for trustworthiness and quality of content of their information sources. But how do users assess trustworthiness? For the case of online video lectures this has been studied in greater detail by Lars König and Regina Jucks, psychologists at the University of Münster, Germany.

The experiments for their paper »When do information seekers trust scientific information?« was published in the International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education in February 2019 (apologies for our generous interpretation of the term »news-letter«). It involved 143 participants who had to watch video lectures on nutrition. The results in short: If the expert in the lecture who argued that organic food is superior to conventional food was a lobbyist who referred to self-conducted studies, he was rated as less trustworthy compared to a lobbyist who referred to studies conducted by other scientists. Even »his instructional qualities were rated as less positive«.

The most important result, however, was this one: »For scientists, this effect did not occur.« Whether they talked about their own research or about results from other researchers, their credibility did not vary. (tk)

Read more:

König, L., Jucks, R. [When do information seekers trust scientific information? Insights from recipients' evaluations of online video lectures](#). Int J Educ Technol High Educ 16, 1 (2019).

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## YouTube bubbles under scrutiny

Although YouTube could be an educational heaven it is still the place where conspiracy theories, right-wing ideologies, fake news and flat-earth videos are booming. The platform's algorithm which recommends videos to its users – and which accounts for 70 percent of videos watched on the site, according to the Mozilla Foundation – is having fun taking viewers into its darkest corners. Like there's a gloating demon at work, it even suggests watching climate change misinformation and then monetizes »that misinformation with ads for the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace« (read more on [vice.com](https://www.vice.com), January 16, 2020).

Beyond such anecdotal evidence researchers are also trying to get a more general picture of the algorithm's misbehaviour. Marc Faddoul and Hany Farid from the University of California, Berkeley, and Guillaume Chaslot from the Mozilla Foundation undertook »[A longitudinal analysis of YouTube's promotion of conspiracy videos](#)« to »better understand the nature and extent of YouTube's promotion of conspiratorial content«. (Their paper is not peer-reviewed.) They wanted to know if YouTube's efforts to reduce »borderline content and content that could misinform users in harmful ways« ([YouTube's Official Blog](#), January 25, 2019) yielded results. It did: »Our analysis corroborates that YouTube acted upon its policy and significantly reduced the overall volume of recommended conspiratorial content.« Farid, a specialist on digital forensics, image analysis, and human perception, is also an advisor of the international non-profit [Counter Extremism Project](#).

In the meantime, there is a new Mozilla project underway, as [engadget.com](https://www.engadget.com) reported on July 15, 2020: [TheirTube](#) illustrates what six personas – fictional online identities – are recommended by YouTube to watch. Here you can have an instructional look at the online life of a fruitarian, a doomsday prepper, a liberal, a conservative, a conspiracist and a climate denier. (tk)

Read more:

Faddoul, M., Chaslot, G., Farid, H. (2020). A longitudinal analysis of YouTube's promotion of conspiracy videos. Available online at <https://arxiv.org/abs/2003.03318>

[YouTube Regrets](#): Stories about »bizarre« and »dangerous« recommendations collected by the Mozilla Foundation

## A »standard« for science news videos

How can scientific institutions make better use of the medium video although the production of films require many internal and external resources? The German scientific news service, Informationsdienst Wissenschaft e.V., is [piloting a new video service](#) exclusively for its members. The project had been started in collaboration with Pajam Sobhani, founder of the scientific video journal [latestthinking.org](https://www.latestthinking.org), and Thilo Körkel, co-publisher of this newsletter. Its aim is to standardize content creation and workflow in all production steps in order to produce scientific news videos fast and at predictable cost, quality and impact.

As of today, 45 participants of the idw member institutions – research centers, universities, universities of applied sciences and other institutions of arts and sciences – have been trained in applying the standard and can make use of a handbook, checklists and templates to produce their first videos.

The first examples include [Bäume auf den Acker](#), [Wie ein Antibiotikacocktail Insekten schützt](#), [Zweite Spur für BESSY II](#), [Gencode für die Herzreparatur mit Stammzellen mit Hilfe Künstlicher Intelligenz entschlüsselt](#) and [Digital Care – Matching für die Pflege](#).

One of the upcoming workshops will take place during the (virtual) [Forum Wissenschaftskommunikation](#) from October 5 through October 7, 2020. (tk)

(Declaration of interest: tk has initiated the project and has been actively involved in it.)

## Upcoming events

[Award Ceremony »Goldene Kamera Digital Award«](#), September 8, 2020, Berlin, Germany.

15 German YouTube channels are [nominated](#) for this year's Goldene Kamera Digital Award in the category »Best of Information«, organized in cooperation with YouTube. The winner will be announced during a festival in Berlin on September 8, 2020. The nominees include famous channels like mailLab, Clixoom and Breaking Lab. (tk)

## Reading material

### **Video strategies of the Senckenberg Institution and the Max Planck Society**

Why should scientific institutions engage in the field of video? [This interview](#), published in February 2020 in German language, with Dominik Donhauser from the communication department of the Max Planck Society in Munich and Sören Dürr, head of communications at Senckenberg, Leibniz Institution for Biodiversity and Earth System Research in Frankfurt am Main, gives some answers. Video is considered more sustainable because it attracts users for several years while posts on social media have a short lifespan. It also draws users 18 to 24 years old who are not so well addressed by other formats. And what about the protagonists? Senckenberg puts scientists in the center of the episodes since that "looks authentic and arouses curiosity" and even hired a professional moderator. (tk)

### **Podcast episode »Science in fiction«**

MINTEEE, a small German foundation for the promotion of education in the fields of science and technology by the means of entertainment formats, [recommends](#) a German podcast episode on »science in fiction« as worth listening to. It's the fourth episode of the film-centered series »Are the Kids asleep?«, which started in April 2020, and is hosted by film producers Nadine Gottmann and Sebastian Hilger. (tk)

### **How science communication translates to film**

In this half-an-hour episode of Nature's »Working Scientist podcast« Pakinam Amer, a freelance science journalist and multimedia producer based in Cairo and Cambridge, Massachusetts, »explores how science communication translates to film, comedy clubs, and virtual space clubs.« The episode was published on June 11, 2020 and features, among others, Alexis Gambis, assistant professor of biology at New York University Abu Dhabi and founder of labocine.com, a science film platform and magazine. Listen to it here: [Working Scientist podcast: How films and festivals can showcase your science](#). (tk)

(Declaration of interest: tk is an employee of Nature Research, the publisher of Nature.)

Videos only look good if you watch them

## **Dancing the zebrafish**



**Overall winner and social science category winner:**  
**Antonia Groneberg, »Early life social experiences shape social avoidance kinematics in larval zebrafish«**



**Biology category winner:**  
**Katharina Hanika, »Impairing disease susceptibility genes to obtain resistance to Verticillium wilt in tomato«**



**Chemistry category winner:**  
**Jackie Zorz, »An integrated approach to improving efficiency in microbial bioenergy systems«**



**Physics category winner:**  
**Samuli Junttila, »Utilizing multispectral lidar in the detection of declined trees«**

Truly translating their research to the medium dance (and only second to film) is what this year's winners of the »[Dance your Ph.D. contest](#)« have in common – they are all expert science communicators.

That's also where similarities end. The videos which had been submitted to the Science magazine's contest are very diverse not only in the research topics, but also in the type of performance displayed – from belly dance to rap –, the music and the resources that had been available for production. Outstanding is Antonia Gronenberg's »Early life social experiences shape social avoidance kinematics in larval zebrafish« translation into dance and then film. It is clear from the start that this researcher also breathes dance. The choreography is not only beautiful but enacts the research findings in such clarity it is amazing.

Samuli Junttila's »Utilizing multispectral lidar in the detection of declined trees« sticks out among all, because he has an original score, a rap song, and his videos mimics conventional rap videos in a professional way, giving it a fun twist.

Not everyone has the resources available that Gronenberg and Junttila did, and this is what makes this group of videos a good showcase for anyone who is thinking of dancing their science. With much lesser means the other two videos also successfully translate research findings to dance, are fun to watch and make the science much easier to remember. (sg)

»**Science & Video**« is a newsletter for science communicators. In »Science & Video« [Thilo Körkel](#) (tk), [Kerstin Hoppenhaus](#) (kh) und [Sibylle Grunze](#) (sg) pool their long-standing expertise in the field of science communication and moving images. We joyfully welcome the effects of digital disruption, are committed to defending high quality standards, and hope to be part of a future in which science communication via digital media has an increasingly powerful impact on society. Contact us at [thilo.koerkel@nature.com](mailto:thilo.koerkel@nature.com), [hoppenhaus@hgmedien.com](mailto:hoppenhaus@hgmedien.com), [grunze@hgmedien.com](mailto:grunze@hgmedien.com).

#### IMPRESSUM

Thilo Körkel, Obergasse 26d, 61118 Bad Vilbel, Germany, [thilo.koerkel@gmx.de](mailto:thilo.koerkel@gmx.de), +49 175 18 18 881

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