



Time to shine the light

Geologists need to make the most of our subject in order to inform environmental debate and combat disinformation, says **David Dennison**

The June 2019 *Geoscientist* editorial, 'Geology the Obscure' was a great and timely reminder that despite our best endeavours, the world of geology and Earth sciences remains one of our best kept secrets. We clearly have some way to go to consider ourselves a truly inclusive science.

Public interest and disinformation

As never before, there is huge public interest in understanding global trends in our physical environment, including relative changes in sea level, loss of ice sheet cover, variable and extreme temperatures, mass extinctions and increasing levels of carbon dioxide. Sadly, we are also confronted by disinformation on a daily basis and worryingly much of it is deliberately misleading.

As geologists, our expertise ranges across many of the significant changes that have occurred on Earth over time. There is a bigger role for us to play in informing the environmental debate and making use of our access to a considerable database going back literally millions of years.

It's all too easy for us to forget the complicated nature of some of the knowledge we hold and to assume others are on the same page. In order to shine that light more effectively we need to provide further regular and qualified insights in a form more readily understood and accessed by the general public.

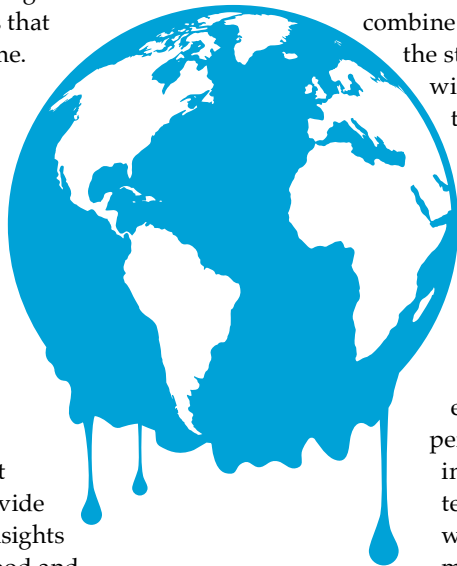
Wood for the trees

Even within our own ranks we are missing the opportunity to extract the most out of the insights and meaning from our research. The blame for this sits mainly at our door. We are a passionate, intellectual and friendly bunch, but much of our valued work is very

detailed, far ranging yet specific, which makes it hard for even some fellow geoscientists to fully appreciate – myself included. We should be incentivising authors to provide us with more technical papers connecting many of the latest key observations, rather than just encouraging new research that gathers new data to test new hypotheses. When do we stop and take stock?

Hail the geology ambassador

Good communication is a core skill respected across many industries. The ability to connect and impart knowledge or to relay a story well has been a valued attribute since year dot. There are many examples of great scientific orators, including the likes of Sir David Attenborough and Professor Brian Cox. They capture our imagination and leave us wanting to hear more. The trick has been to



combine the enthusiasm and the story-telling ability with providing the key technical detail in a form fit for general consumption.

It feels like there is a gap in our field of speciality that needs filling. The challenge for our profession is to encourage the right person to step forward in a similar way and tell our story more widely through the media. We probably already know the

right sort of person within our geological community, we just need to give him or her that gentle nudge. As Professor Brian Cox would undoubtedly say, things can only get better.

David Dennison, Director, Ridge Top Consulting
E: dajdennison@gmail.com

SOAPBOX CALLING!

Soapbox is open to contributions from all Fellows. You can always write a letter to the Editor, of course, but perhaps you feel you need more space?

If you can write it entertainingly in **500 words**, the Editor would like to hear from you. Email your piece, and a self-portrait, to sarah.day@geolsoc.org.uk. Copy can only be accepted electronically. No diagrams, tables or other illustrations please.

Pictures should be of print quality – please take photographs on the largest setting on your camera, with a plain background.

Precedence will always be given to more topical contributions. Any one contributor may not appear more often than once per volume (once every 12 months).

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DAVID DENNISON