



RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS

Annual Report 2009



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Executive Summary

In 2009:

- Research Communications produced 99 stories, with 97 percent appearing in the mainstream print, broadcast and Internet media.
- Top stories for the year included a study of Facebook use and grades; science education; childhood obesity; and the melting of ice atop Kilimanjaro. These stories were picked up by the *New York Times*, the Associated Press, *National Geographic* and National Public Radio, among many others.
- We disseminated 93 stories through *EurekAlert!* and reporters around the world viewed them more than 300,000 times. A similar number of stories posted to Newswise drew more than 56,000 viewings.
- Our stories were used extensively within University Communications: four were used as splash pages, and 35 were used as “redlinks” on the OSU homepage. OSUToday used 39 of our stories, while *onCampus* used 81.
- More than 44,000 people read our stories on the university Web site. They viewed each story for an average of about one minute. Most were referred by a search engine or news outlets, and most people read only one story before leaving the site. That means that most visitors came to us in search of specific information, which they read in detail.
- Two new blogs, *On Research* and *My Plan For Health*, extended our reach globally, attracting nearly 16,000 visitors from 160 countries worldwide.
- Our successes come despite the fact that our staffing was down 20 percent with the loss of our intern, Jenna McGuire, who left us to do communications for the Ohio Department of Development.

Electronic Distribution

Who we reach, and how we reach them.

In 2009, we saw a marked decrease in the number of print news outlets, and a marked increase in the number of Internet news outlets. The number of people who are willing to pay for print publications is dwindling, while the number of people who read news for free on the Internet is growing. Clearly, our electronic distribution system reaches the general public more directly than ever before.

Two Internet “Wire” Services

To reach reporters, we distribute our stories through two major outlets that allow tracking of views. These are [EurekAlert!](#), a paid service run by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and its main competitor, [Newswise](#), a commercial service.

It’s important to note that both services provide secured access to posted information for reporters who are authorized to view embargoed material. Posting material here allows those members of the news media access to information before it goes public. But the general public can also access non-embargoed stories on these sites, and they have become important and primary sources for science news for many people, not just journalists.

EurekAlert! offers secure, embargoed access to more than 6,600 reporters and freelancers from 64 countries. About half of those reporters are in the United States. The *EurekAlert!* Web site receives 2 million visits each month, from an average of 1 million individual visitors.



During 2009, Ohio State posted 93 stories to *EurekAlert!* with:

- A total of 313,129 viewings
- An average of 3,367 views per story
- The least-viewed story garnered 634 hits
- The most-viewed story was seen by 14,757 individuals

At least 8,272 journalists, including more than a thousand freelance reporters, subscribe to *Newswise*. Currently, 3,987 media outlets receive daily information from this service.



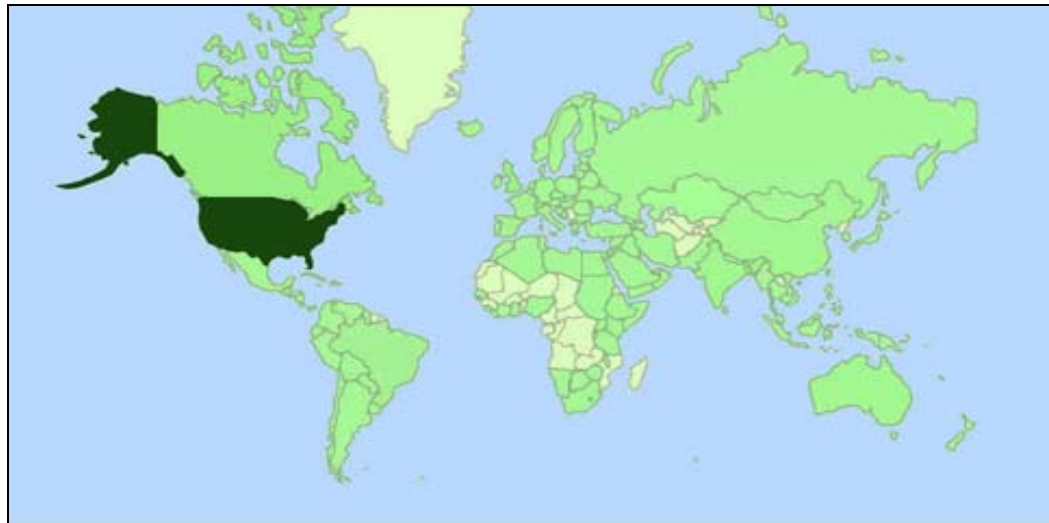
During 2009, Ohio State posted 95 stories to *Newswise* with:

- A total of 56,590 viewings
- An average of 596 views per story
- The least-viewed story garnered 188 hits
- The most-viewed story was seen by 2,241 individuals

Our Web Site

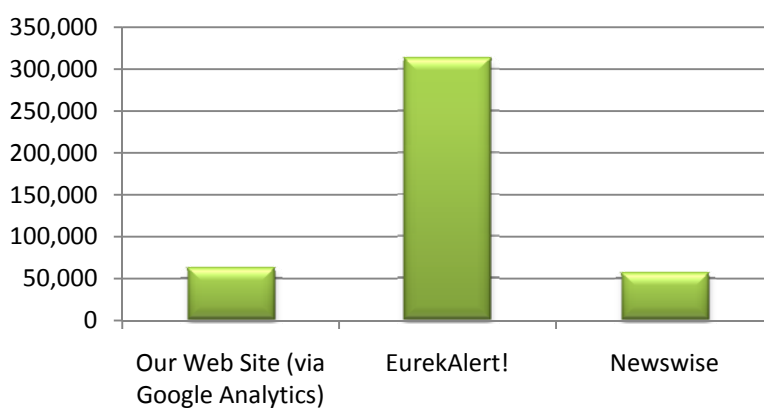
We also track public viewings of each story posted on our [Web site](#) using Google Analytics. In 2009:

- There were 62,356 page views
- There were 44,254 individual visits to the site from 160 countries
- Visitors spent an average of 1 minute and 7 seconds on each page
- The peak usage was 1,126 visitors in one day
- 77 percent of the visitors were “new” (as depicted in the map on the cover of this report)



Visitors to the Research News Web site by country -- intensity of color indicates more visitors (Map by Google Analytics)

News Release Viewings by Source



Obviously, our hits via *EurekAlert!* greatly outweighed hits from other sources. We suspect, however, that most of the *EurekAlert!* hits are actually from the general public, rather than reporters. This assertion is based on the fact that there are only 6,600 reporters registered at *EurekAlert!*, but we received more than 300,000 hits.

Blogs

Research stories aren't the only way we reach the public. Our staff produces two blogs that reach impressive numbers of people:

[On Research](#) – an analysis of research on campus and in the news:

- 7,989 page views
- 6,743 individual visitors from 160 countries
- Visitors spent an average of 2 minutes and 48 seconds per visit
- A peak of 597 views in one day



Visitors to the On Research Blog by country -- intensity of color indicates more visitors (Data from Google Analytics, map by [Many Eyes](#))

[My Plan For Health](#) – a research-focused exploration of OSU’s health and wellness incentive plan:

- 16,878 page views
- 8,423 visitors from 97 countries
- Viewers spent an average of 1 minute and 47 seconds per visit
- A peak of 387 views in one day



Visitors to the My Plan For Health Blog by country -- intensity of color indicates more visitors (Map by Google Analytics)

Science 360

Among the more significant placements for research news from American universities is coverage by [Science 360](#), a relatively new Web site run by the National Science Foundation.

Science 360 provides a daily overview of science news garnered from news releases,



science coverage in the conventional news media and content from various national blogs. Additionally, NSF provides a daily e-mail newsletter to subscribers, regularly teasing the content of the changing Web site.

During 2009, Ohio State research information was included in the Science 360 offerings nine times – two specific research stories, one of which included video, and seven references to postings on the *On Research* blog.

Science 360’s daily newsletter is distributed to more than 1,400 subscribers – mostly journalists, news media outlets and public information officers at research institutions. Based on an assessment using Google Analytics, Science 360 averages about 12,000 page views per month by as many as 6,000 individual visitors who spend from 1.5 to 2 minutes on average reading the Web site’s content.

News Coverage

The percentage of our news releases which garnered news coverage in 2009, and an overview of coverage through the years.

In the 13 years since we in Research Communications began tracking our news coverage, we've written an average of more than 100 research stories each year. In 2009, 97 percent achieved major coverage, as shown on the next page.

For the third year in a row, 100 percent of our stories achieved Web coverage. It now seems like a foregone conclusion that the Web will propagate everything we produce, so we have elected to remove Web coverage as a separate category. Prominent Web news sites that provide original content, such as WebMD and Space.com, will join old media print and broadcast outlets in the "major coverage" category. We will cease to keep track of smaller Web outlets.

Clearly, the media landscape is changing. Last year, nearly 150 American newspapers went out of business, and more will likely follow in 2010. The Internet eclipsed newspapers, and is now second only to TV as people's favorite news source.

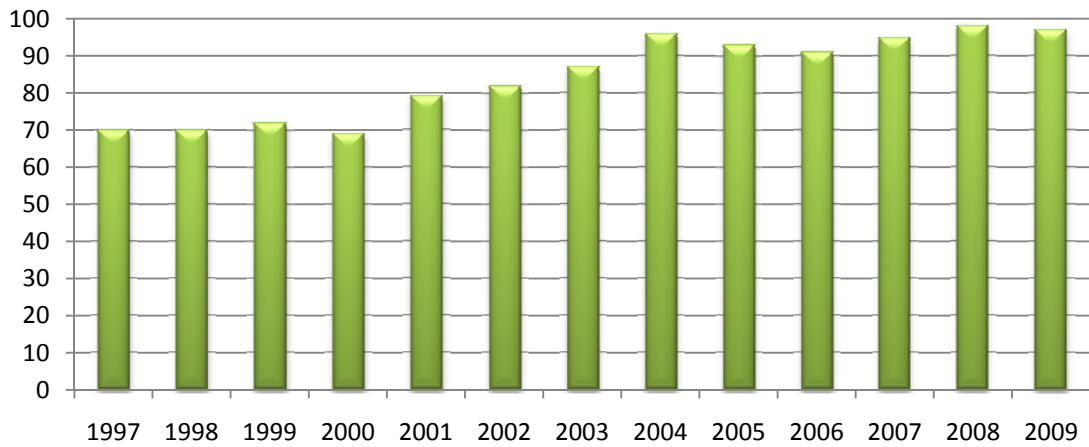
A few key "old media" outlets are providing most of the country's news content, with blogs, Facebook and Twitter propagating the content. Certain bloggers have now achieved a level of credibility to rival the old media, while many old media reporters are taking jobs in public relations, where they now compete with us.

But despite these upheavals, our coverage rate remains mostly steady. We believe it's because we strive to provide high-quality content that stands out from the rest of the PR "background noise."

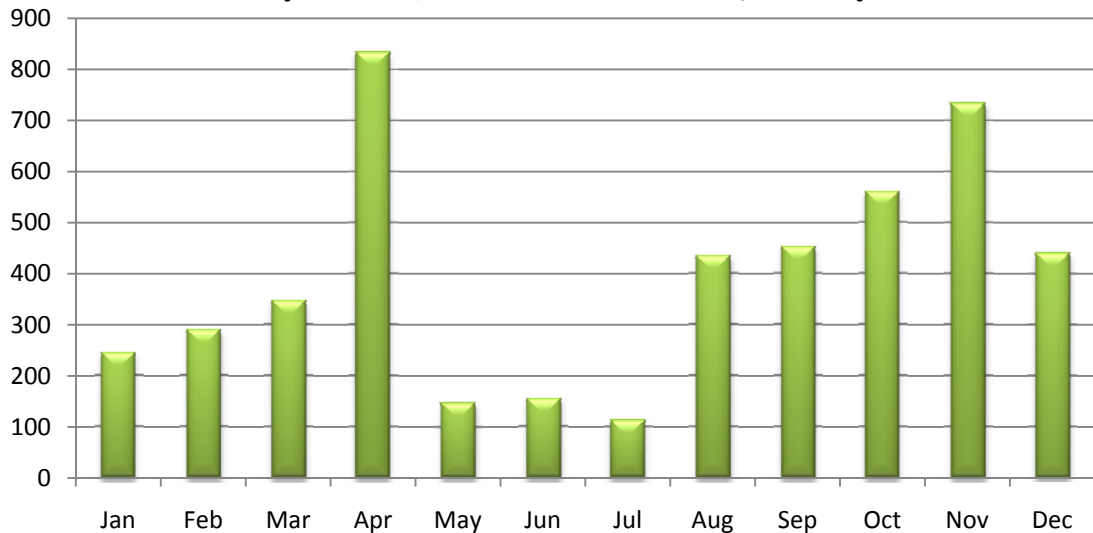
The charts on the following page offer our coverage by year starting in 1997, and by month for 2009.

Research Communications Coverage													
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total Research Stories	93	108	92	101	93	82	121	130	98	119	111	122	99
Number that achieved major coverage	65	76	66	70	74	67	105	125	91	108	105	119	96
News Briefs						22	24	23	18	15	11	7	16
Splash Pages					13	12	10	14	10	7	6	5	4
Homepage Redlinks									8	7	24	26	35
onCampus Stories					45	53	72	72	69	85	78	81	81
OSUToday Stories					52	65	49	67	91	67	43	50	39

Percentage of Stories that Achieved Coverage, 1997-2009



2009 Media Mentions by Month (via Meltwater Statistics, courtesy of Media Relations)



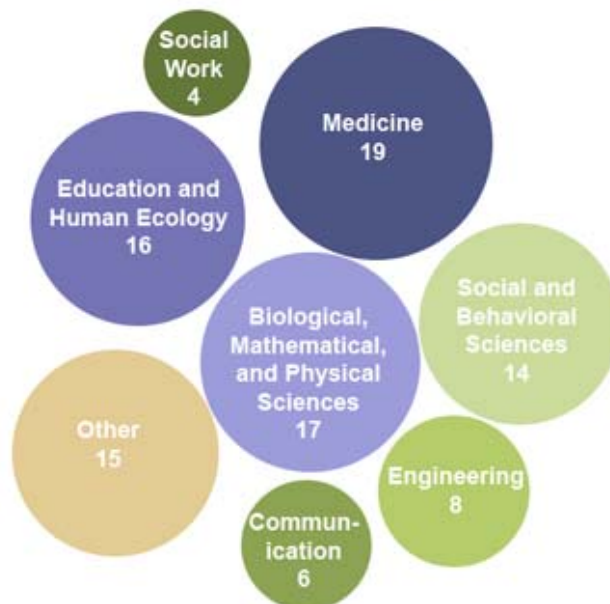
Research Areas

The colleges and research centers that we publicize.

We promote research from all corners of the university. The particular set of colleges and research centers that we cover in any one year varies by the newsworthiness of research emerging from that area. This bubble chart shows the number of stories we did per research area.

“Other” includes: Arts and Humanities (1 story); Business (3 stories); Center for Human Resources Research (1 story); Dentistry (1 story); Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (2 stories); Optometry (1 story); Public Health (3 stories); and Veterinary Medicine (3 stories).

Stories by Research Area, 2009



Ancillary Work

Other ways we use our stories and interact with reporters.

Our stories are used elsewhere in University Relations; they appear in every issue of *onCampus*, and provide the content for many OSUToday items, splash pages, and “redlinks” on the OSU homepage. We also publish numerous “Research News Briefs” which are not necessarily meant to garner news coverage, but to inform the media about important issues. Lastly, we interact with reporters through professional activities such as science meetings and reporters’ workshops.

Efforts within University Relations

Our activities within University Relations in 2009 were typical of most years; four of our stories were used as splash pages, and 35 were used as “redlinks” on the OSU homepage, directly linking people who browse the university Web site to our content. OSUToday used 39 of our stories, while *onCampus* used 81.

In every issue of *onCampus*, we provide content for the Discoveries page and two Discoveries news briefs. But we also write other stories specifically for *onCampus* that appear in other sections of the paper throughout the year, including stories on major faculty awards and grants and visiting speakers.

Issues Management

We published 16 “Research News Briefs” in 2009 -- more than twice what we did in 2008. Some of them dealt with faculty awards and grants, while others detailed serious events such as the opening of an agricultural diseases lab in Wooster and a federal report disputing PETA’s allegations of lab animal abuse.

Not all research events and issues involved a News Brief, however. An important part of the role of Research Communications is to provide public relations counsel and communications support to university units facing challenges related to the research enterprise. These instances can range from crisis communications to staffing events where research leaders or national media figures visit campus.

In 2009, we provided support for the following episodes:

- Provided communications counsel to College of Veterinary Medicine on controversy involving research compliance and student pig roast;
- Met with alumnus of College of Veterinary Medicine who was concerned about animal rights responses and outlined OSU's communications plans/response;
- Advised leadership in College of Veterinary Medicine and College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences on conference on animal welfare, communications involving pending legislation and larger issue;
- Provided counsel to research compliance officers on communications about export control issue;
- Participated in federally mandated training drill at university's nuclear reactor;
- Provided counsel on response to petition from the Humane Society of the United States asking Ohio State to forgo all research that might involve pain;
- Provided ongoing counsel to College of Veterinary Medicine on its interactions involving the controversy over the Franklin County Dog Shelter;
- Worked with Medical Center Communications staff to advise faculty on response to reporter's inquiry on research program involving cadavers;
- Provided advice and counsel on communications issues pertaining to proposed PAAR facility (Wooster BSL3-Ag-3 facility);
- Advised chairman and faculty in the Department of Anthropology on communications involving the disposition of the "Buffalo 600" bones to West Virginia;
- Provided counsel on dealing with opposition from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on research by Chandan Sen;
- Worked with University Laboratory Animal Resources staff regarding halting of research project involving untended rats and dismissal of researcher;
- Worked with Todd Guttman and research compliance staff on inquiry from journal *Science* on researcher and issues of conflicts of interest;
- Worked with staff in the Office of the Director of the National Institutes of Health to respond to complaints and allegations by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) about research by George Billman;
- Worked with University Laboratory Animal Resources staff on the issue of using "class-B" dealers to supply animals for university research;
- Provided communications counsel on various research misconduct cases;
- Worked with College of Education and Human Ecology on handling past scientific misconduct allegations against a new faculty member.

Professional Activities

Throughout the year, we attend meetings where we mix with both scientists and reporters as colleagues, and forge new relationships. These activities provide long-term payoffs in news coverage.

Here is an overview of our professional activities for 2009:

- Participated in national advisory committee meeting for *EurekAlert!*, the primary distribution outlet for research news in the country and a project of the American Association for the Advancement of Science [Earle];
- Served on invited public affairs advisory committee for the National Science Foundation's Office of Legislative and Public Affairs and counseled OLPA staff on working with university PIOs [Earle];
- Speaker at OSERA (Ohio Scientific Education & Research Association) Animal Forum this fall [Earle];
- Managed preparations for annual announcement of new Fellows named to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and served on the President's AAAS Fellows Committee [Earle];
- Served on the board of directors for Americans for Medical Progress, a leading national organization supporting the use of animals in research [Earle];
- Had published four op-ed pieces at *The Observatory*, a blog on the Web site of the *Columbia Journalism Review* [Earle];
- Wrote 27 essays for the *On Research* blog at OSU [Earle];
- Addressed participants at the university's "Spinal Cord Injury Training Program" on science communications [Earle];
- Provided communications counsel and support for annual meeting of National Science Board on campus [Earle];
- Addressed statewide meeting of grad students in neuroscience fields on science communication at Denison University [Earle];
- Spoke twice to *Lantern* staff regarding Research Communications resources on campus and science communications in general [Earle];
- Was interviewed by writer from *Environmental Health Perspectives* magazine for story on "framing" science [Earle];
- Served as primary adviser for graduate student at Antioch University on thesis in science communications [Earle];
- Gave presentation to new faculty as part of day-long activities on Research Expo day [Earle];
- Served as regular member of the university's Chemical Security Committee and served as communications officer [Earle];
- Served as primary host and contact for team from the Weather Channel who spent two days at Byrd Polar Research Center [Earle];
- Facilitated Ohio State's invitation to host the annual meeting of the National Association of Science Writers and the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing "New Horizons In Science" press briefing in 2014 [Earle];
- Served as "guest" during final auditions for candidates to replace retiring Fred Andrlle at WOSU [Earle];

- Interviewed by *New York Times*' former science editor Cory Dean for her book, *Am I Making Myself Clear?* and quoted frequently in chapter on public affairs [Earle];
- Co-chaired the Education Committee of the National Association of Science Writers, including management of the organization's Travel Fellowship, Mentorship Program and Internship Fair [Jeff];
- Member of the Web Committee of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) [Earle and Pam];
- Regular columnist for NASW magazine *ScienceWriters* [Pam];
- Attended annual meeting of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) [Jeff];
- Attended annual New Horizons in Science Press Briefing sponsored by the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing [Earle, Jeff, Pam, Emily];
- Attended the American Psychological Association meeting [Jeff];
- Attended the American Astronomical Society (AAS) meeting, and acted as deputy AAS press officer [Pam];
- Attended the American Geophysical Union (AGU) meeting, managed the AGU press room, and facilitated an Ohio State press conference [Pam];
- Judged the American Institute of Physics science writing awards [Pam];
- Created the *My Plan For Health* blog and wrote 59 posts [Pam];
- Executive Board member of the Association of Staff and Faculty Women at Ohio State, seeking to advance the university's research enterprise during planning of programs and conferences [Emily];
- Co-coordinator of the 2009 Campus Campaign for Univ. Comm. [Jeff];
- Invited speaker to a graduate class on research methods in the College of Education and Human Ecology [Jeff];
- Judged research communication posters prepared by graduate students in a Human Ecology class [Jeff].

New Initiatives

New activities in 2009, and future plans.

The initiatives we began in 2008 extended our global reach in 2009.

Blogs

The *On Research* blog gathered momentum, and we launched a second blog, *My Plan For Health*. Both attracted viewers worldwide.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) took notice of *On Research*. *Science 360*, a new NSF Web publication, linked to the blog several times over the year, directing traffic to our site.

While many institutions use their blogs as just additional venues for disseminating their research stories, we wanted to do something different. *On Research* is intended to offer a broader picture of academic research by instead focusing on topics that either concern the scientific community or which are science issues with the potential for broadly impacting the public. We also concentrate on issues of science communications that can help readers better grasp research issues.



Among the topics we broached in 2009 were why TV weathercasters deny climate change, why reporters are obsessive about timeliness, NASA's proposed mission to Jupiter's moon Europa, why much of the public appears anti-science, the public's tragic misunderstanding of what became known as "climategate," and why researchers who misbehave deserve their punishments. We also spent time explaining why the discovery of the *Darwinius* fossils was an exaggeration and why the discovery of *Ardipithecus* was a true wonder. Our arguments about why animal rights protests -- and protesters -- are wrong resulted in us being targeted by a national animal rights group.

Simply put, On Research was intended to make readers think differently and more deeply about the science news they receive. Based on the feedback we're getting, we seem to be succeeding.



We produce *My Plan For Health* in partnership with the New Media and Photography units of Marketing Communications. It's an outgrowth of the university's *Your Plan For Health* incentive program, and aims to inform faculty and staff about the myriad health and wellness resources that are available to them at Ohio State and in the surrounding community.

Last year, the blog promoted Pelotonia, Hit the Road with the Buckeyes, the Health and Wellness Fair, the Faculty and Staff Fitness Program, Lunch & Learn, and the Flu Information Web site.

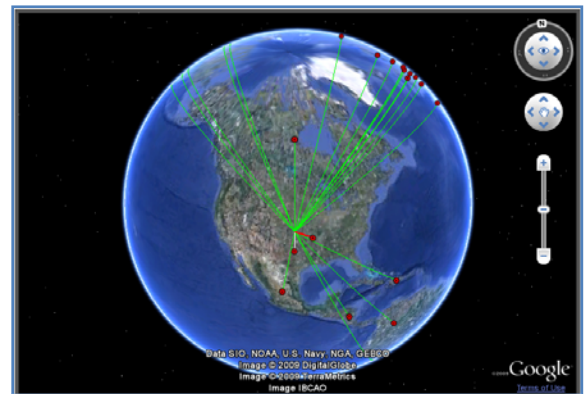
The format mirrors the top news and commentary blogs, in that it mixes research news with personal opinion. It links to reputable sources of information both inside and outside the university. It also includes original reporting -- based on interviews with Ohio State faculty and staff whose research touches on current health and wellness issues.

One goal of *My Plan For Health* is to demonstrate that all sectors of the university are tied to wellness in one way or another. As one might expect, experts in nutrition, nursing, and exercise science make frequent appearances, but so do professors of chemistry, earth science, statistics, psychology and dance.

Original photography and features on the Ohio State homepage brought the site to life and connected it with faculty, staff, students and alumni. *onCampus* occasionally highlighted the blog, and *The Lantern* covered it as well.

Video

Another new initiative begun in 2009 was to collaborate on multimedia stories with the media relations staff at Ohio State's Medical Center. This resulted in expanded broadcast coverage of two of our health sciences stories – one about depression and immunity in pregnant women, and another featuring Dan Janies' popular mapping of how flu spreads around the world.



The green lines on this map represent how pandemic influenza (H1N1) has moved from points in the United States to geographic locations across the globe.

Both video stories aired more than 200 times in a range of television markets, including some of the largest: Los Angeles (NBC), Washington, D.C. (NBC), Detroit (NBC), Seattle (NBC) and Denver (CBS), as well as a few international markets in Canada and the Cayman Islands.

This collaboration is expected to continue, especially given the appointment of a major Research Communications story source, Randy Nelson, as chair of the Department of Neuroscience within the medical center.

We are also working with Joe Camoriano in Media Relations to give on-camera training to researchers whose work and communication skills make them a good fit for television or Web video.

Press Conferences

We are increasing Ohio State's visibility at national science meetings – such as the American Geophysical Union (AGU) and the American Astronomical Society – by working with society PR staff to engineer press briefings during those conferences.

Even though the media landscape is changing, most science reporters still try to cover science meetings in their beat areas. The best way to reach those reporters is through a press briefing.



Ian Howat, Ohio State; John Adler, U Colorado, and Alberto Behar, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, at AGU press conference. We gave media training to all three, and helped them prepare their presentations for the press.

We've enjoyed some success with this initiative; the AGU was so pleased with the outcome of our December 2009 press conference that they invited us to submit press briefing ideas for upcoming conferences, beginning with one in February 2010. Most recently, a January 2010 astronomy press briefing has attained national and international publicity.

To prepare our researchers to participate in press briefings, we are stepping up our media training efforts. We are helping them prepare their slide presentations, and giving them basic training in working with the media. Further, we provide on-site assistance to researchers and reporters at the meetings.

