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Debate about Scientific Popularization in Russian Public Sphere

(Based on Grey Literature Material)

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In the past few years, the idea of science popularization has revived in Russia. Her promotion is accompanied by large debates. Evidences of this discussion are primarily accumulated in the grey literature. This is the main reason that this discussion is centered around the same issues forming a hermeneutic circle



The speaker is engaged into the process of science popularization in the aspects of education, research, as well as in the public activities. The speaker was the organizer and participant in a number of scientific conferences, discussions, seminars, devoted to science communications and promoting. These materials are mainly reflected in the conference programs and post-releases. Accordingly, they are available to a relatively small circle of interested parties.



The Main Discussion Topics

Is journalist able to popularize science?

A positive answer to this question has long been known. However, here is the polarization of the points of view. Russian scientists believe that science journalists and writers are only make harm. Representatives of the communicative sphere are confident that Russian scientists themselves at the moment are not able to explain to the public the essence of their work



The Main Discussion Topics

Is it necessary to popularize humanities?

In this sense, a logical continuation should be implicit question: “Is humanities research?”. Russian gray literature paradoxically convinced that only natural and technical knowledge is a true science. So, here is a characteristic split in modern Russia between humanitarian and natural science



The main body of the Russian grey literature related to the topic of pseudoscience and the fight against pseudoscience

Passion for combating pseudoscience appears to be the legacy of the Soviet exposing companies. The latest trend of struggle against pseudoscience, in our view, does not introduce new meanings in a conversation about science popularization, as calls for a system of prohibitive measures and is based on the rhetoric of annihilation



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In those cases when discussion proceeds to the media, it not becomes more meaningful because it does not base on the previous experience, reflected in grey literature. As an example, we give a representative event, which was held on June 28, 2016 in the upper house of the Russian parliament – the Federation Council



На мероприятии были озвучены инициативы создания ассоциации научных журналистов и научно-популярных изданий, а также организации и реализации проектов «Золотой фонд Российской науки» и «Научный Олимп», которые вошли в рекомендации круглого стола.



В работе круглого стола приняли участие представители академического, научного и журналистского сообщества, такие, как: профессор МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова **Л.А. Коханова**, вице-президент Российской инженерной академии **М.Р. Либерзон**, известный российский научный журналист **В.С. Губарев**, ректор Московского Государственного технического Университета гражданской авиации **Б.П. Елисеев**, доцент СПбГУ, руководитель магистерской программы «Научно-популярная журналистика» **Ю.Б. Балашова**, главный редактор научно-популярного журнала «Кот Шрёдингера» **Г.В. Тарасевич** и многие другие.



Discussion "The role of science journalism in the development of scientific and technological development of the country"

It had potential of a large conference and represented a constructive attempt to combine different participants of the objectively difficult process of scientific popularization. Among them were representatives of the university and academic community, science journalists. During this debate it was able to overcome the estimated range of conflicting judgments accompanying discussion around the problem field: science – journalism



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During the speeches sounded the idea that society needs a popular science again. The authority of the Russian science remains the highest in the world, but it lacks the publicity. Therefore, the Russian scientific sphere in particular, needs a mediator between knowledge and society. In the developed in science promotion countries and especially the United States the ability to external communications is competence of the modern scientist, and any academic institution is accompanied any serious research by information campaign

Despite the constructive nature of the discussions, this event caused a negative response in the press. The author of the negative response in the leading popular science Russian newspaper “Troitsky variant” (under the name of Moscow suburb) was a student (or may be – graduate student). In accordance with her position, the government is not able to organize this kind of events, as, indeed, to engage science popularization. This position, in principle, contrary to all history and practice of science popularization in Russia. In addition, this view completely ignores the experience of similar events, reflected in grey literature

From my side, I acted in the same newspaper with an alternative evaluation. And this position received support in the other media

If the discussion on the issues about science popularization takes into account a variety of materials published in grey literature, it would be much more constructive