

Annual Report 2011

Introduction

The SMC is an incorporated association with a goal to serve the general public. Run by a team of Waseda University researchers, the SMC acts as a communication base for scientists to share their views on the latest scientific research developments. It is my hope that the SMC becomes an important part of society, and maintains its independence while working alongside the university, the public, and the government. I hope many more institutions will join us, and work together with us.

Seishi Sato
Science Media Centre Chairman

“

An organization unlike any other has joined Japan's scientific community. The Science Media Centre builds a platform for the media, a place where a scientific issue is explained to them from every angle. Look on their website and you'll find scientists supporting an issue, and others criticizing it.

”

Yoshimi Yashiro
Assistant Professor, School of Medicine, Keio University
"思想地図β vol.2 (Thought Map β vol.2)" contetures (2011)

“

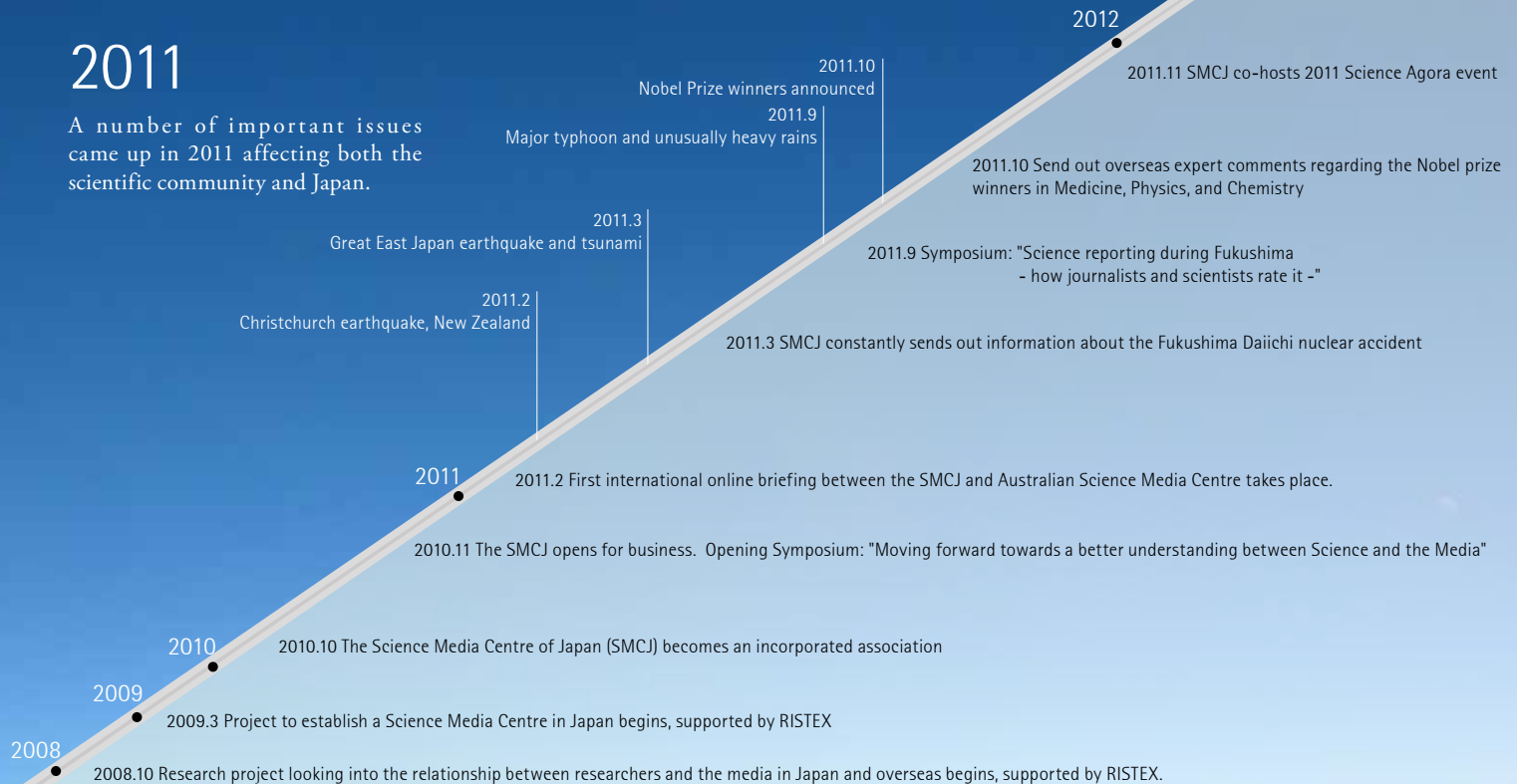
The Science Media Centre is an important organization which sends out comments from scientists and scientific information to journalists when they need it. Anyone can use comments on their website, whether it be for personal use, commercial, or news stories. Although I get my own quotes from experts, the SMCJ has become a valuable information source for journalists.

”

Masami Kojima
Mainichi Shimbun Editorial Board
"正しいリスクの伝え方 (How to talk about risk)" Energy Forum (2011)

2011

A number of important issues came up in 2011 affecting both the scientific community and Japan.



About SMC



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SMC Background

Today we're living in a society with mixed interests. An ever-rising mountain of scientific and technological knowledge is partly to blame for this, and we cannot expect the country's decision makers to understand every aspect of it.

Nor can we expect a scientist specializing in a specific field to come up with a solution to a problem affecting everyone. The key to solving a complicated problem is to combine several kinds of scientific knowledge with the general population's knowledge, debate about it, and then finally the gaps will become more visible.

Japan is lucky. Compared to other countries, there is an overflow of information concerning science and technology, and a media to address it.

Major daily newspapers have science departments made up of tens of reporters, scientific information is uploaded to the internet in English and Japanese, and there is a sub-culture dedicated to reporting on the latest scientific developments. However, with such an endless amount of science news coming in, it is difficult for the media to pick out all of the right information the public needs.



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CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 Photo by IAEA Imagebank

The media has a role to encourage public debate about issues affecting society today by getting both sides of a story. Scientists can only hope that their views are taken into consideration correctly. This led to an idea to create a group which could communicate between both scientists and journalists, paving a new way for public debate.

Making accurate and bias-free science knowledge available to the general public would help guide them to make a better choice for the future. The Science Media Centre will continue to move forward, with a mission to support those who want accurate science in the media.



What Journalists Say

There is a lot of science and technology news, but...

- It's hard to find a scientist who can explain the science in layman's terms
- I live out in the country and it's hard to find a scientist
- No one wants to talk if it involves ethical or political issues

What Researchers Say

It's important for journalists to get everyone to hear what the science says, but...

- Journalists don't understand the nature of the problem
- Scientists are mis-quoted
- Scientists get pressured into saying what journalists want them to say



SMC's Data

1,362,140

Page views the SMCJ website recorded in the month following the March 11 Japan earthquake

24,670

Times SMCJ articles have been shared online

101

Expert comments collected

80

Enquiries from overseas media

13,613

Followers on the SMCJ'S Japanese twitter account

305

Followers on the SMCJ's English twitter account

3959

Articles using comments
sent out by the SMC

Media Monitors

367

Current number of
journalists registered to
the SMC

65

Science alerts sent out

8

Seminars and workshops
the SMCJ has hosted

113

Average number of
viewers watching SMCJ
videos live

34

Science events the SMCJ
has streamed live on the
internet

"Getting comments from a scientist is hard..."

The media's structure is currently undergoing a major transformation. It is also getting harder to interview scientists who work in highly-specialized research fields. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident is one event a number of journalists had trouble reporting about.

Journalists need the following things to create a balanced and accurate story:

- (1) Basic understanding of how science works
- (2) Understand the social issues surrounding the science and what scientists think about it
- (3) Find an expert who can explain the science

The SMC offers help to journalists who do or do not specialize in science by introducing them to the right experts. We are able to do so by searching through the SMC's scientist database.

Finding a scientist

For many journalists covering a science story for the first time, the biggest question is "who can I trust?" The SMC's scientist database is continuously being updated with more and more experts who are well-respected in their fields, and more importantly know how to talk to the media.

By registering with us, the SMC can help journalists find the right expert when you need them.

Science Alert

When science in the headlines, what do scientists think about it? To get a picture of what the issue is, it is important for journalists to ask a few scientists to comment on the news. However, it takes a lot of time and effort to find an expert willing to talk, check their quote, and put it into their story. To help out, the SMC sends out Science Alerts. These emails are filled with comments collected by the SMC from a variety of scientists on controversial topics currently in the news. The comments alone give an insight into how the scientific community agrees or disagrees on an issue. Journalists are free to use any comments in their stories, and can contact the listed scientists for their own interview.



Science  ALERT

Media Briefing

To tackle a science story, sometimes it is helpful for the media to be in the same room with scientists who can explain the science and answer their questions. Media briefings hosted by the SMC provide a place for this to happen.

In February 2011, the Japan and Australian SMCs worked together to hold a joint briefing during an international nanotechnology event in Tokyo. The briefing was streamed live on the internet in English and Japanese.



For Scientists

"How do scientists talk to the media..."

Following 2011's Great East Japan earthquake, people have realized how important it is to have scientists engage with the public.

A scientist does research for a living. However, when a controversial science issue connected to their research comes up in the news, the scientist is obligated to help the public understand what it means. But speaking to the public without some media training could potentially lead to widespread panic, and damage the reputations of those who were brave enough to speak up. The SMC helps scientists get their stories and views out to the media.

Scientist Database

Many scientists in Japan have had media training and are confident with speaking to the public thanks to years of promotion science and technology communication. The problem is many journalists do not know they exist. To address this, the SMC has created a database of scientists so that we can find the right expert to speak to a journalist working on a story. More than 100 scientists have signed up to our database, and have helped us by providing comments on controversial issues that we can send out to our registered journalists. However, we are constantly on the look out for more scientists willing to help us and welcome you to join our database.

Monitoring the media

Every day, pages and pages of news about science and technology make it onto the internet. Sifting through all the news and sorting them into groups would take forever. The SMC takes on this challenge and collects, organizes, and sends out the most important and interesting science news stories of the day in an email to our registered users. Users can also choose to have their emails customized so that they only receive the news that they want.

Streaming scientific seminars and events live on the internet

The advancing internet age has made it possible to send videos out for the world to see using one mobile phone. But to create a high quality video with crisp images, clear sounds, and no signal interruptions requires a team of professionals. The SMC has both the equipment and team to make high-quality internet streaming possible. Videos are streamed live on the internet via the SMC's video channels on USTREAM and Nico Nico Live Streaming. There is no advertising, videos can be streamed in two languages at the same time, and videos can be edited afterwards for record. Over the SMC's first year, 34 events have been recorded by our team.



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Starting in 2012

Media Training for Scientists

"That's not what I said." Many scientists talk about how they were unfairly quoted in a news story. But with a little bit of training, it is possible to prevent these mistakes from happening again. Talking to the media requires some different skills from talking to a group of scientists. The SMC is currently constructing a number of resources and workshops for scientists to learn more about talking to the media. It will look at the media through mass communication studies, social psychology, and scientific sociology.

* For further details, contact the SMC

Global SMC Network

The SMCJ is committed to collaborating and sharing information with Science Media Centres across the world.

United Kingdom	Science Media Centre (UK)
Australia	Science Media Centre of Australia (AusSMC)
New Zealand	Science Media Centre of New Zealand
Canada	Science Media Centre of Canada

The expanding SMC network

Since the opening of the first Science Media Centre in London, several others have opened up across the world, and many more will soon join our network. By sharing information with SMCs overseas, expert comments have been able to be translated for media in other countries.

The network has already covered a number of stories together, making a significant impact on the worldwide media.

"Japan Passing"

Sending science news from Japan out into the world

Not only are SMCJ Science Alerts translated into English for the international media, but science news making headlines in Japan are updated to the SMCJ's Twitter feed and Facebook page in English. Many stories have already been picked up by journalists overseas.

ABC Radio (Australia), Associated Press (USA), Al Jazeera (Qatar), BBC (UK), CBS (USA), Newstalk ZB (New Zealand), Radio Australia (Australia), Radio New Zealand (New Zealand), Stuff.co.nz (New Zealand), The Japan Times (Japan), The New Scientist (UK, Australia, USA), The Dominion Post (New Zealand), The New Zealand Herald (New Zealand), TV3 News (New Zealand).



Messages from SMCs overseas



Fiona Fox
Director / SMC UK
London

As the first Science Media Centre we are very excited about the emergence of a network of SMCs around the world. This confirms that this unique model works well even in countries with very different types of media and different challenges. The model is a success for many reasons but foremost amongst them is our ability to put our commitment to achieving good quality science coverage over any concerns about promoting a brand name or institutional messages. This allows all the SMCs an unprecedented level of freedom to be true to the science and has earned us the trust and respect of scientists and journalists alike. This trust is also reflected in the funding of the SMCs which is set up to reinforce this independence.

Only now are we also beginning to grasp the huge potential for added value that this network provides. When the earthquake and tsunami in

Japan led to the Fukushima nuclear crisis, the SMCs were able to show that scientific expertise is truly international by sharing the views of nuclear experts in all countries and to speak to our colleagues in Japan on a daily basis to hear how their scientists were reacting to the crisis.

At our first ever global SMCs meeting at the World Conference of Science Journalists in Doha earlier this year the room was bursting with excitement at the potential for this network as colleagues from Italy, China, Denmark and Norway joined the established SMCs to tell us of their plans to establish new ones. We are only at the start of this exciting journey and there will be challenges along the way but already we are building up examples of how this collaboration will be good for science and the media around the world.



Dr Susannah Elliott
CEO / SMC Australia
Adelaide

The growing international network of Science Media Centres is the most exciting development in the science-media landscape. The grand opening of the SMJ in November 2010 brought the number of SMCs around the world to five and gave us a sense of excitement at the potential for collaboration between the centres.

Already the SMJ has shown the value of SMCs in non-English speaking countries by translating comments from Japanese experts in the wake of the tsunami and nuclear incidents in Japan in March. Though this was a very challenging time for such a new centre, they managed to provide a valuable service for journalists in Japan and overseas. At a time when accurate information was scarce and public anxiety was

great, the SMC network was able to provide the media with a constant stream of fundamental information about radiation, nuclear reactors, contamination and safety. Having five SMCs working together on this story had a much larger impact on global media coverage than any of us could have had alone.

Our collective vision is for a future in which a global network of SMCs becomes a powerful voice for evidence-based science in the media throughout the world, bringing much needed sanity to public discourse on everything from climate change to HIV. I believe we are well on the way to achieving that vision.

Support Us

How the SMC operates

The SMC will keep its independence, and continue to support scientists and the media. Although the SMC has been largely funded by the Research Institute of Science and Technology for Society, and therefore the government's Japan Science and Technology Agency, it has been allowed to function as an entirely independent organization.

This year our goal is to create more services for our registered users, and become a self-sustainable centre. In order to achieve this, we need the support of the country, companies, and individuals to keep our centre running. The more support we can get, the more we can operate as fairly as possible. Over the next year the SMC will continue to work alongside the Institute for Research in Contemporary Political and Economic Affairs at Waseda University, and work alongside the Graduate School of Political Science's Journalism School to stay connected to educating future journalists. we will also invite professionals and researchers from other universities and research centers to join our team of staff or advisory board.

How to support us

To remain an independent voice for science, the SMC welcomes anyone who would like to support us.

About funding us

Corporate supporter: 200,000 yen for one year

Advertising benefits. We welcome any companies wanting to become a SMC Supporter. Company slogans or logos will be displayed on the SMC Website, and any resources produced by the SMC. Donations may not exceed 20% of our annual total budget estimate.

Individual supporter: 15,000 yen for one year

Individual supporters are entitled to joining in SMC seminars and workshops for free.

Our Supporters

Joining the SMC

The SMC is kept afloat by the many comments by scientists in our Science Alerts. If you are interested in joining our network, please contact us.

We are also always looking for part time staff interested in joining our internet video team and translating team. If you have any skills in these areas, please contact us.

Research Institute of Science and Technology for Society (RISTEX)

Since 2009, the SMCJ has received funding from the Japan Science and Technology Agency-RISTEX's "Science and Technology and People" division, headed by Yoichiro Murakami.



<http://www.ristex.jp/>

Australia-Japan Foundation

Since 2010, the Australia-Japan Foundation has funded the SMCJ and AusSMC, allowing each to help science media coverage in both countries.



<http://ajf.australia.or.jp/>

SAKURA Internet Co.,Ltd.

As the SMCJ's website has been supported by Sakura Internet, allowing staff to make modifications such as working on the site simultaneously.



<http://www.sakura.ad.jp/>

Companies supporting the SMC

In order to preserve its independence, the world's first SMC in the UK caps donations at 5% of its total annual running costs.

One of their 70+ supporters is oil company BP.

Despite receiving funds from BP, the SMC UK continued to release comments from experts during the Gulf of Mexico oil spill in 2010, some of which criticized BP. The company had a choice to stop supporting the SMC, but did not. From a public relations point-of-view, one could say the company supports fairness in reporting.

Similarly, the SMCJ plans to implement a 10% capping rule. We would like to thank everyone for supporting us in our first year, and hope that we can continue with your help.

Website and Social Media

Official website [http:// smc-japan.org/eng](http://smc-japan.org/eng)

Twitter **smcjapan**
Japanese <http://twitter.com/smcjapan>

Twitter **smcjapan_eng**
English http://twitter.com/smcjapan_eng

USTREAM **SMC-Japan**
<http://www.ustream.tv/user/SMC-Japan/videos>

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