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Interpersonal Trust in the Era of Scientific Communication with Artificial Intelligence—An Essay

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal trust is a fundamental pillar in the process of learning and delving deeper into various topics of interest, with people frequently seeking the support of scientific communicators. These professionals hold the responsibility of making complex concepts and scientific jargon accessible to a non-specialized audience. In the current scenario, the integration of Artificial Intelligence-based tools in scientific communication offers significant potential to optimize content production, both textual and visual, accelerating the cycle of informational material creation and elevating the efficiency in knowledge dissemination. However, this essay delves into the inherent risks to trust in AI-mediated scientific communication and discusses the potential risk of alienating the public interested in science due to the excessive or uncritical use of AI by communicators, especially when human curation and critical evaluation are ignored. Public trust can be compromised if they perceive that the content does not stem from the communicator's human knowledge, but rather from an artificial tool, generating a sense of deception and treachery. Transparency regarding AI use, the maintenance of human curation, and rigorous ethical oversight are essential elements to leverage the benefits of AI without compromising the human element and the trust people place in scientific communicators. The essay advocates for a careful balance, where AI acts as a supportive tool to enhance the capacity of human communicators, and not as an integral substitute for judgment, ethics, and authenticity in the dissemination of scientific knowledge.

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1. Introduction

In an era where technology increasingly speed-up our lives, the question of trust, particularly in the digital world, becomes fundamental. This is especially true for science communication, a field grappling with the challenge of making complex information accessible and engaging for a broad and non-specialized audience. This essay try to explore the overlap among interpersonal trust, artificial intelligence (AI), and the field of science communication. The central argument orbits the question about how much AI offers exciting possibilities for disseminating scientific knowledge. In other hand, it could be risks further, far away the public from science when the communicator uses AI without critical evaluation as well without of human knowledgment and curation [1].

When scientists communicate their work with authenticity, passion, and a genuine desire to connect, they are more likely to foster trust with their audience [1].

It's important to highlight the potential benefits of using AI as a supportive tool in science communication. AIpowered tools can enhance efficiency by automating tasks such language translation, content distribution, as well AI algorithms can help tailor scientific content to specific audiences, increasing its reach and impact [2–4].

We also need to touch the inherent risks of relying solely on AI-driven communication without human curation. The communicator should avoid the opacity of many AI tools, often perceived as "black boxes" whose decision making processes remain unclear [2,5,6].

However, by relying too heavily on black-box, potentially biased algorithms to generate and disseminate scientific content, we risk losing this vital human element [2,5].

This lack of transparency can fuel mistrust, particularly when dealing with intricate scientific concepts [2,5].

Furthermore, there is a potential risk in AI to perpetuate biases and generate misleading or fake information, losing public trust in science [2,5,7].

Science communicators must prioritize transparency, ethical conduct, and human oversight to responsibly integrate AI tools into science communication. This means clearly disclosing AI use in content creation, including the specific technologies used and their functions, to maintain public trust and allow for scrutiny of potential biases. It is important to identify and address potential biases present in the AI algorithms or training datasets to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the information disseminated. Importantly, human oversight is essential throughout all stages of AI integration in science communication.

2. Evolution of Scientific Communication

The history of science communication can be traced back to the 19th century, with early efforts focused on disseminating scientific findings to a wider audience. During the 20th century, the field gradually expanded, driven by initiatives such as specialized magazines, radio and TV programs, newspaper columns, and the establishment of classes organizations. In the early 20th century, science communication primarily focused on conveying results and technical applications. The latter half of the 20th century saw the emergence of the "deficit model," which assumed a lack of knowledge among the public and aimed to "save" individuals through scientific information. However, a countermovement emphasized the role of science communication in fostering dialogue and public engagement in scientific policy decisions [8]. By the 21st century, the rise of the internet and social media transformed communication dynamics, enabling individuals to share information and influence public opinion [1,9].

Worth remembering the scandal surrounding the data leak from Facebook (now Meta) to Cambridge Analytica during the 2016 election of Donald Trump revealed how personal data from social media could be misused to manipulate public opinion.

The second decade of the 21st century witnessed a growing need for critical and contextualized science communication, recognizing the influence of science and technology on people's lives and the importance of public participation in decision-making processes [8].

In addition, the use of bots and "like" farms on social

media have created an artificial environment where interactions and engagement are faked, reinforcing information bubbles and promoting fake influencers.

These kinds of events raise questions about trust in digital platforms and the interactions of online interactions, creating a scenario of distrust that can be amplified if science communicators rely on automated AI tools without the debt cured.

This era also marked the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a potential tool for scientific writing, offering new possibilities and challenges for the field [3,9].

While still in its early stages, AI's ability to process large amounts of data and generate text suggests its potential role in enhancing science communication, particularly in tasks like summarizing scientific articles and making complex concepts more accessible to broader audiences [4].

In most serious journalistic companies, as Grupo Globo the biggest journalistic company in Brazil, there are some principles to use AI in communication [10]. The editorial principles were written in 2011, but updated recently to cover AI in the topics. Grupo Globo established clear guidelines for the use of AI in journalism, highlighting transparency, human oversight, and adherence to ethical and professional values. AI tools can be utilized to optimize processes such as information gathering, data analysis, and the creation of content in various formats, including text, video, audio, and infographics. However, ref. [10] said, all AI-generated or AI-assisted content must undergo human supervision, with ultimate accountability resting on the professionals involved, who must employ strategies to mitigate errors or biases. The use of AI for editorial or opinion writing is strictly prohibited, and AIgenerated content, such as images or audio, must be clearly identified as made with AI to the audience. Furthermore, AI tools must be deployed in compliance with copyright laws, intellectual property rights, and applicable regulations, while continuous training ensures that professionals use these technologies ethically and in alignment with editorial standards. As well the scientific journals, like Elsevier [11] or IEEE [12], and many others, explain the author is responsible for the content, and usage of AI should be proctored and curated because all the behavior from technology as output can be authoritative, incorrect, incomplete or biased.

3. Artificial Intelligence and Scientific Communication

Key aspects of AI-powered communication involve increase its ability to enhance accessibility by translating complex scientific jargon into simpler language, increasing efficiency by automating tasks like data analysis and literature reviews, and personalizing content to make science more engaging for individuals [2,4]. These aspects try to fill the gap between scientific research and public understanding, ultimately fostering greater accessibility and engagement with scientific knowledge. For instance, AI language models can be used to paraphrase scientific texts, similar to tools like Grammarly, which have become widely accepted for improving language clarity [5]. Or new one like Curie, by American Journal Experts (AJE) who introduce itself as "Your expert companion in academic writing", that I got notice by reviewing the process for submit a manuscript to Springer Nature [13].

Applications of AI in this domain include content creation, assisting in writing press releases, and generating summaries of research articles [3,5]. The goal is speed-up AI's ability to process information and create coherent narratives, freeing up researchers to focus on more complex tasks [14]. However, the impact of using AI on public trust is key point. Transparency is essential! Audiences must be informed when AI generates content to avoid distrust [5]. AI should be used as a tool to augment human communicators, not replace them, as emphasized by interviewees who acknowledge the expertise of science journalists in communicating research effectively [14].

There are some fields and topics that we should be concerned about, like the key aspects of AI-Powered science communication, it's important to highlight that AI can make scientific knowledge more accessible to wider audiences. For example, AI-powered language models can translate complex scientific jargon into simpler language, making it easier for non-experts to understand [3,4]. AI can automate time-consuming tasks, allowing researchers to focus more time on conducting research and engaging with the public [5]. AI can be used to personalize science communication, tailoring content to specific audiences based on factors like age, interests, and prior knowledge. This can help make science more engaging and relevant to individuals [3,4,14].

Regarding the applications of AI in science communication, is possible highlight AI tools like ChatGPT by OpenAI, Gemini by Google and many others can assist in writing press releases, creating social media posts, and generating summaries of research articles. These AI-generated texts can then be reviewed and edited by human communicators [4,15]. AI can analyze large datasets to identify trends and patterns, helping to make scientific data more understandable and relevant to journalists and the public. This can be used to create engaging infographics, interactive visualizations, and even identify potential areas for further research [2,4,14]. AI can play a role in identifying and flagging scientific misinformation online, such as articles and misleading posts on social media. This can help ensure that the public has access to accurate and reliable scientific information [6].

About the impact of AI on public trust, while AI offers significant potential for science communication, its use also raises important questions about transparency and Disclosure, it's crucial that the use of AI tools in science communication is transparent. If audiences are unaware that content is generated by AI, it can lead to distrust and skepticism [5]. Openly disclosing the use of AI and providing clear explanations of how it was used can help build trust with the audience [5,14].

Despite advances in AI, maintaining the human element in science communication is paramount. People trust people, particularly when it comes to complex, saleable and potentially sensitive topics like scientific discoveries and their implications or strategical financial benefits [5]. AI should be used to augment and support human communicators, not replace them entirely [14]. AI algorithms are only as good as the data they are trained on. If the data contains biases, the AI can perpetuate and even amplify these biases. This is a significant concern, as biased AI can erode public trust in science and scientific institutions [2,6,14].

As studied by [16], confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information that confirms preexisting beliefs or hypotheses, while giving less attention to or ignoring information that contradicts those beliefs. The desire for consistency between beliefs and evidence can make it difficult to objectively evaluate new information. In her analysis, she brings several factors that can contribute to the confirmation bias. The impact of confirmation bias on belief formation is significant and one more is relevant for an essay. The overemphasis on confirming evidence means that individuals tend to give greater weight to information that supports their beliefs while downplaying or dismissing contradicting evidence. It's because these tendencies reinforce existing beliefs, making individuals more likely to believe in information that aligns with their preconceived notions, even if it lacks objective support [16].

In short, it can be understood that there is a tendency to believe in situations that are common sense, even if that illustration does not exist in reality, because this way of thinking is comfortable for our personal beliefs.

To illustrate this issue of overemphasis on confirming evidence, I created four prompts for generating images using Grok, from company X (formerly Twitter). This was the only Generative AI tool that generated images of public individuals. Two of them are in the political sphere where there is deep impact in the society and life of people, and other two depict scenes on Mars, a topic of great public interest and therefore fertile ground for misinformation. The first and second image simulates a plausible fact, while the third and fourth presents a clear fantasy.

The example of **Figures 1** and **2** could easily pass for something real, but popular perception would not have the same feeling when observing **Figures 3** and **4** which, despite being possible in the human sphere, is clearly something unrealistic to happen.

To generate the **Figure 1** this prompt was used: "Create an ultra-realistic image of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro passing the sash of President of the Republic to current President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, in a symbolic ceremony. Make sure that the background of the image appears blurred on top of a platform. Emphasize mainly the two presidents, Bolsonaro must be uncomfortable with the ceremony and Lula must be happy.

Figure 1 could represent reality because it is plausible to expect the former president to participate in the symbolic act of passing the sash to the president-elect, that is, if former president Jair Bolsonaro had not traveled to the United States a few days before the ceremony, which makes this image an artificial generation that only simulates a real possibility. On that occasion, the transition team for the symbolic passing of the sash was carried out by a group of eight people.

Figure 1. Former President Bolsonaro passing the sash in 2024 for the actual President Lula. Source: Grok (x.ai), created in December 2024.

The **Figure 2**, could easily represent a historic scientific discovery. The image is technically believable: the lighting, soil texture, and rover design appear authentic to a layperson. A science communicator, uncommitted to the truth, could use this image to announce "the first proof of complex life on Mars," exploiting the public's desire to believe such a fact (a clear confirmation bias). The falsehood would only be obvious to experts familiar with the instruments' true capabilities and the geological context of Mars, but once viral, the damage to trust in science would already be done when the truth came out.

Figure 2. A NASA rover's robotic arm inspecting what appears to be a fossil in a Martian rock. Source: Grok (x.ai), created in July 2025.

In the case of **Figure 2**, the prompt was: "Ultra-realistic NASA-style photography, a close-up of the Perseverance rover's robotic arm on Mars examining a Martian rock. The rock, partially covered in red dust, reveals the broken fossil of a nautilus-like creature, with segmentation and detail showing parts of the fossil covered in dust and rock. The fossil is likely embedded in the rock. The robotic arm is positioned near the fossil. The scene is illuminated by strong, direct Martian sunlight, creating sharp shadows. The background shows the arid, rocky terrain of Mars with a caramel-colored sky. Full focus on the details of the rock and fossil. 8K, photorealism."

Figure 3 is clearly an image that would not be in people's common-sense imagination, mainly because it involves two presidents of the Brazilian republic who are on opposite sides of the political spectrum and they are having fun together on a rollercoaster. Although this image is possible to imagine with any other individuals, which makes it feasible in terms of general reality.

Figure 3. Former President Bolsonaro and the actual President Lula having fun in a rollercoaster. Source: Grok (x.ai), created in December 2024.

For **Figure 3** the prompt was used: "Generate an ultra-realistic image of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro enjoying a rollercoaster ride with current President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, both looking happy with their arms raised. Make sure the background of the image appears blurred and follows the pattern of a rollercoaster."

The **Figure 4**, the prompt was: "Ultra-realistic and cinematic image of a male and female astronaut having a picnic on the surface of Mars. They are sitting on a red and white checkered tablecloth, wearing their full spacesuits except for the astronaut helmets, which are next to them

on the tablecloth. They look happy, enjoying time together, while fruit and bread are on plates and glasses of juice are on the checkered tablecloth. In the background, the Curiosity rover is stationary. The landscape is that of the planet Mars, with its red soil and distant hills under an orange sky. 8K, photorealism."

Figure 4. Family of astronauts enjoying a picnic on Mars. Source: Grok (x.ai), created in July 2025.

Figure 4 is clearly a work of fiction. Nobody would believe that astronauts could remove their helmets and have a picnic in the Mars atmosphere. The scene is absurd, and its purpose is playful, not misleading. Although it is also generated by AI, its implausibility makes it harmless from a disinformation perspective.

The comparison between the two groups (**Figures 1** and **2**; **Figures 3** and **4**) highlights the central challenge: the same technology can be used to create both dangerous falsehoods and harmless fantasies. This reinforces the thesis that the role of the science communicator as an ethical and transparent curator is more crucial than ever. The responsibility to verify, contextualize, and be honest about the use of AI tools is fundamental to maintaining public trust, the cornerstone of all effective science communication.

4. Trust in Scientific Information Sources

There are some challenges making scientific information understandable and trustworthy for the general public. One of the main challenges is the gap between scientists and the public, as scientists often use technical language that is difficult for non-experts to understand [1,3].

Simplifying complex scientific language for broader audiences presents a significant challenge: making scientific concepts accessible without sacrificing accuracy. This challenge is highlighted by the need to avoid oversimplification, which can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of scientific findings. While using metaphors and analogies can be helpful in explaining complex ideas, it's important to ensure these write approach don't distort the underlying scientific principles. Striking a balance between clarity and scientific rigoris crucial for effective science communication, requiring careful consideration of the target audience's existing knowledge and the potential for misinterpretations [8].

Another major challenge is building trust in scientific information, especially with the rise of misinformation, propagated by regular people who don't check facts. As already cited, it's important to highlight the human side of science, showcasing the passions and personalities of researchers, can help make science more relatable [1]. Transparency about the scientific process, including its limitations, is also crucial for building trust and demonstrating integrity [5]. Digital platforms and AI have the potential to help, but they need to be used ethically and responsibly [3,6,7].

While not specifically focused on science communication, there is approach of sharing authentic and reportable content [17] might offer insights for scientists seeking to connect with a broader audience [3,5,7]. However, careful attention must be paid to potential biases and the risk of inaccuracies in AI-generated content [5–7]. Building trust in scientific information requires scientists to engage with the public in accessible and meaningful ways, science communicators to translate complex findings effectively, and digital tools to be used or implemented responsibly and ethically.

To achieve transparency in AI-generated content, science communicators should explicitly state the use of AI tools and provide specific information about the AI's role in the content creation process [2]. This transparency allows for scientific scrutiny, including the possibility of replication and identification of any potential biases introduced by the AI. For instance, details about the specific AI tool used, its purpose (e.g., language assistance, literature search, generating non-novel text), and the extent of its contribution should be clearly articulated. This detailed disclosure enables the public to understand the limitations and potential influences of AI in the research process, fostering trust and accountability in scientific communication [5].

It's important to highlight the need of incorporating human oversight at various stages of AI deployment. This includes training and raising awareness about the ethical implications of AI in scientific research to ensure responsible development and implementation [2]. Moreover, establishing clear ethical guidelines for AI use in scientific publishing, similar to those outlined by the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL), can help prevent misuse. For example, outlining acceptable AI applications, like language assistance or literature searches, while discouraging inappropriate uses, such as generating false data or plagiarism, can help maintain public trust in scientific communication. By combining transparency, ethical guidelines, and human supervision, we can harness the benefits of AI in science communication while mitigating the risks of misinformation and manipulation [5].

In the UNESCO's report, produced by [18], is possible to see statistical answers for 500 content creators from 45 different countries. The relationship between digital content creators and the veracity of information is complex and concerning. While these creators wield significant influence, their practices often fall short of established journalistic standards for verifying information reveals a startling disregard for factchecking. Sixty-two percent of surveyed creators admitted to sharing information without verifying its accuracy, often relying on trust in the source rather than engaging in critical evaluation. This lack of rigor is compounded by a reliance on popularity as a primary indicator of source credibility. Forty-two percent of creators consider the number of likes and views as the most significant factor in assessing credibility, followed by endorsements from trusted friends or experts at 21%. This suggests a concerning trend where virality supersedes factual accuracy in shaping content creation practices. Furthermore, the study reveals a heavy reliance on personal experiences and online sources, including non-mainstream media, while official sources are largely disregarded. This preference for personal narratives and unvetted online information raises concerns about the potential spread of misinformation [18] says 68.7% of creators believe they promote critical thinking among their audiences, despite this pervasive lack of fact-checking. This disconnect highlights the need for media and information literacy training specifically designed for digital content creators. The study's findings underscore a real need to address the gap in knowledge regarding international standards and legal frameworks, as 59% of creators shows limited understanding in these areas. This lack of awareness further jeopardizes the accuracy and ethical implications of content creation in the digital landscape.

5. Strategies to Strengthen Trust in Scientific Communication

It's important to highlight that people generally place more trust in individuals than in faceless corporations. When the scientific communicator breaks the relationship with the audience, it loses all the communication principles with the society [1]. While this statement might generally hold true, it is essential to acknowledge that trust in individuals versus institutions can vary depending on various factors, such as cultural background, personal experiences, and the specific field of science in question.

Building trust in science communication is a complex endeavor with implications for education and scientific literacy. One key aspect highlighted is the importance of bridging the gap between complex scientific language and the public's understanding. Its need for clear and accessible communication that doesn't sacrifice scientific rigor [1,3,8]. Finding ways to explain complex topics in a way that means with non-experts, potentially through metaphors and analogies, is part of the challenge [8]. However, it needs to do with caution against oversimplification, which can lead to misunderstandings and lose the trust [4,8].

The role of education in fostering scientific literacy is another key-point in the process. Early exposure to scientific concepts and research methods can help individuals develop critical thinking skills and a better understanding of the scientific process [1,14]. This foundation in scientific literacy can make individuals more discerning of scientific information and less susceptible to misinformation [1,3,17].

Introducing critical thinking skills at a young age is vital to fostering a positive relationship with science and avoiding apprehension towards scientific concepts, similar to overcoming math anxiety stemming from inadequate teaching methods. Just as some individuals develop a fear of mathematics due to negative experiences with teachers who failed to present the subject effectively, a lack of critical thinking skills can lead to a fear of scientific information.

Showcasing the passion, curiosity, and even the struggles of scientists can make science feel more relatable and less intimidating. Sharing personal stories and experiences related to scientific discoveries can make the information more engaging and memorable. This includes acknowledging limitations, uncertainties, and potential biases in research. By being upfront about these aspects, science communicators can demonstrate honesty and a commitment to scientific integrity, ultimately enhancing public trust [1–3,14].

6. Threats to Validity

As a researcher specializing in computer science with a focus on artificial intelligence, rather than a dedicated science communicator, my approach to terminology and concepts may diverge from that of specialists in the field of scientific communication. It is worth noting that the interpretations and perspectives may vary due to the subjective nature of the essay. Other authors may emphasize alternate dimensions or propose different methodological approaches, especially as related concepts are continually refined in conferences and peer-reviewed publications and it mutates fast.

7. Conclusions

By nurturing these skills on critical thinking and scientific methods early on, individuals can learn to approach scientific claims with healthy skepticism, evaluate evidence, identify biases, and form their own informed conclusions, even its informed by scientific communicators. This approach can empower individuals to engage with science confidently and avoid feeling intimidated by complex scientific language or concepts.

Based on these main ideas, this essay propose that successful science communication depends on trust the power of human connection.

AI has the potential to be a powerful tool for science communication speeding-up the material production, but its use requires careful consideration of the ethical and responsible implications. By prioritizing transparency, maintaining human oversight, and addressing concerns about bias, we can leverage the power of AI to make science more accessible and engaging while fostering trust with the public.

By highlighting these potential pitfalls, this essay advocates for a balanced approach to integrating AI in science communication - one that emphasizes human oversight, ethical considerations, and transparency to ensure that trust remains a key-point of scientific discourse.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.D.; methodology, N.D. and S.I.; validation, S.I.; writing—original draft preparation, N.D.; writing—review and editing, S.I.; supervision, S.I. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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