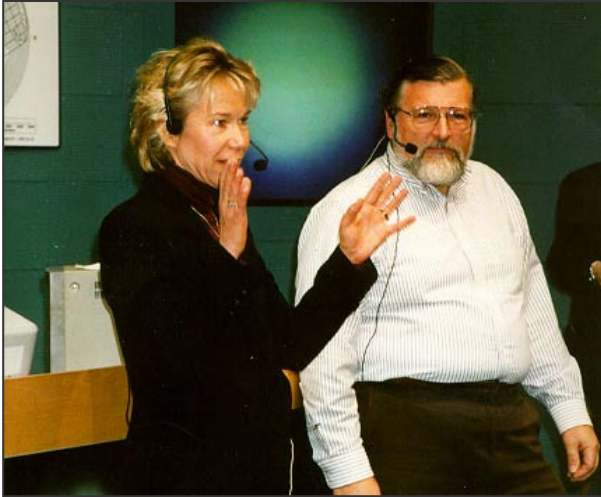


PROFILES OF SCIENTISTS IN EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

This profile is based on excerpts of an interview of Dr. Janet Luhmann about her involvement in Education and Public Outreach (E/PO), specifically her participation in the total solar eclipse webcasts produced by NASA's Sun-Earth Connection Education Forum (SECEF) and the Live@The Exploratorium program. Dr. Cherilynn Morrow (Space Science Institute – SSI) designed the interview questionnaire. Christy Edwards (also of SSI in Boulder, CO) conducted and edited the interview in March, 2001.



UCB/SSL researcher Dr. Janet Luhmann describes the impact of the sun on the Earth. Dr. Phil Scherrer from Stanford University's Solar Oscillations Investigation Group looks on.

Current professional position:

I'm a Senior Fellow researcher at the Space Sciences Laboratory (SSL) at the University of California, Berkeley, and I work in a space physics group. I lead investigations, edit a scientific journal and manage a small research group.

Description of Janet's featured E/PO role:

I participated in a solar eclipse event at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. My role was to interact with the large group of people who had gathered to watch the eclipse that was being webcast from Aruba on 26 February 1998. I worked with an emcee and another solar scientist (Dr. Phil Scherrer) from Stanford. We spent the day answering questions on the eclipse, and on some related visuals we had each sent in advance.

How she got involved in the webcast:

The whole key was having the opportunity presented to me through SECEF. In making the connection between me and the Exploratorium, they provided a framework which I could not possibly have created on my own, simply for lack of time and knowledge. Having that framework, and being approached by the SECEF people here asking, "Would you do this?" "Would you help us?" provided the encouragement and incentive.

Comments on her time commitment:

My time commitment is pretty modest. Since SECEF (a NASA E/PO management group here at SSL) sets up the framework for my E/PO interactions, and my preparation is basically my career, almost all I have to do is appear for the event. There may be a brief period of intense activity, an occasional day's commitment, but I find it to be a very efficient and effective process.

Challenges to her E/PO involvement:

Aside from the challenge of finding the time to do it, there's also the matter of communicating the material in an understandable way. Doing E/PO without a large investment of time sometimes requires going into it without having passed it by educators or youngsters who might be able to tell me if it's the kind of thing that would work or not. Often I have to play it as I go, and hope that the real-time feedback keeps the exchange understandable and interesting.

What she got out of her participation:

It's a very good feeling to see young people engaged in what I'm saying. Though E/PO activities are generally not compensated, they are an important way of sharing my knowledge and my excitement with those who ultimately support my research. I'm able to give something back in other ways besides the writing of journal articles, and adding to encyclopedias. I'm really touching people in every walk of life. In addition, I got to watch the live video of the eclipse along with everybody at the Exploratorium.

Janet's words of wisdom about E/PO:

If scientists make the right connection, they can do something important and valuable without a huge investment of time. With SECEF, we have the contacts and capabilities to make connections with the education world as we've never had before. I find that it's possible to invest 10% of my time and get a lot out of that 10%. Although we already often feel over-subscribed, and E/PO seems like "yet another thing to do," much can be done with good arrangements by those who know the E/PO business. It's a good investment in the future to get involved in E/PO, even at the 10% or less level. I hope more people will look into contacting NASA's E/PO organizations to see how they can work together within whatever commitment constraints they have.