



Plume de fumée à laquelle M. de la Roche a vu le feu d'artifice dans l'air et le de (Bar. à Paris 1774) Thoms. n. 23 (fa. semblant la même qu'à Paris. Represen. elle dans la même proportion qu'en m...

Cône de Chimborazo

Point de Chimborazo mesuré M. de la Roche, M. de la Roche et M. de la Roche le 21 Janvier 1774 (1774) Thoms. n. 23

Point de Popocatepetl

Point le plus haut (de Chimborazo) mesuré M. de la Roche et de la Roche en 1774

Cône de Cotopaxi

Point du Pic d'Orizaba en Sibiquep

Point de Montblanc à laquelle M. de la Roche a vu le feu d'artifice en 1774

Point du Pic de Veyla

The art of the pitch

Northeastern University
School of Journalism

Aleszu Bajak

The art of the pitch

What's happening?

Why now?

Why me?

What sources and data?

Who is in this story?

**How much space do you need? 300 words?
(Shoot small)**

It's a numbers game
Shows you can write (no typos!)
Shows you're deeply sourced
Shows you've done your homework
Know your publication!

Hey Matt,

Personal

Hope all is well! I trust my Beantown pal Rachel Ehrenberg is keeping your inbox full of great pitches!

News peg

I was wondering if you had anyone writing up a short piece on the tempestuous state that Chile's science is currently in? **There are hundreds of scientists in the streets** demanding more positions, more investment in basic research and the creation of a science ministry. The director of the country's **Tasty details** national science council resigned last week, in part because he **hadn't been paid a salary in six months**. The demands, mostly coming from **white-coated, fed-up researchers**, for the president and the private sector to take basic science seriously has reached a fever pitch in the last few days...

My deep knowledge

Chile, home to vast reserves of copper and gold, is one of South America's most stable economic powers. But, scientists complain, the state adds little value to the resources it exports and is more focused on short-term profits than developing a scientific culture that would improve its prospects once natural resources like copper and fishmeal run out. Chile invests an astonishingly low percentage of its GDP (0.38%) in science (the lowest of all OECD countries) despite having a larger economy than countries like Argentina and even Brazil.

More data

This is an important story. The solution does not seem near. **A letter has been signed by hundreds** (if not thousands) of scientists in and out of the country and real protests in the streets have already formed.

Let's talk if you're interested. I just got out of a weekend-long conference with 49 Chilean scientists so I **have my pick of sources**--NASA project leads, CDC collaborators, and of course plenty in-country.

My best!

My sources

Hope you'll entertain a pitch of mine in the future if this flops :-)

News peg  

Chile's scientists take to the streets over funding

Researchers leave their labs to call for greater public support of research.

Aleszu Bajak

16 November 2015

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Gabriel León

Scientists marched in Santiago to protest Chile's comparatively low rate of research funding.

Faced with street protests by researchers, together with the resignation of the nation's top science official and the publication of an open letter accusing the government of ignorance, Chile's Congress will on 16 November consider a budget increase of 150 million pesos (US\$210,000) for the nation's research funding agency.

Tasty details

The protests began with the resignation on 29 October of Francisco Brieva, who directed the funding agency — the National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT). Brieva's plans to invigorate public investment in Chilean science were stymied, he told Chile's *El Mercurio* newspaper on 1 November, by a bureaucracy that “stifles”. Brieva said the fact that he hadn't received a pay cheque in the

Mercurio newspaper on 1 November, by a bureaucracy that “stifles”. Brieva said the fact that he hadn't received a pay cheque in the six months since he assumed the position underscores how debilitated the agency is.

More data

The 9 November open letter, republished by the newspapers *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, denounces the government for choosing “to ignore the voices of the national and international community and with its decisions plunge the country into ignorance and poverty”. The letter was drafted by Andrés Couve Correa, president of the Chilean Society for Cell Biology in Santiago, and Carolina Torrealba, director of new projects at the private research institute Fundación Ciencia & Vida in Santiago. Couve says that it has so far been signed by more than 1,800 researchers.

With a budget of 3.15 billion pesos, CONICYT funds more than 3,000 researchers through young-investigator grants, postdoctoral fellowships and grants to established scientists. But its funding has not expanded enough to accommodate all of the scientists trained domestically and abroad, says Jorge Babul, president of Chile's Council of Scientific Societies in Santiago.

My deep knowledge

Chile invests less than 0.5% of its gross domestic product (GDP) in science, compared with 2.8% by the United States and 1.7% by Britain. Brazil is the only South American country that invests more than 1% of GDP in science.

Home to vast reserves of natural resources, Chile is one of South America's largest and most stable economic powers. But the state adds little value to the resources that it exports, says Gabriel León González, a biochemist and director of the Center for Science Communication at Andrés Bello University in Santiago. He joined hundreds of other scientists in a protest in front of La Moneda, the presidential palace in Santiago. He says that the government focuses on short-term profits over developing a scientific culture that would improve its prospects once resources such as copper, gold and fishmeal run out.

My sources

Scientists say that they are eager to advocate for themselves, but haven't been given a seat at the table. The last two administrations have failed to increase the number of scientists on the committees that decide scientific funding, says César Hidalgo, a Chilean network scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge. In 2013, he says, the government set up a 15-person committee to discuss scientific institutions; all but 4 members were economists.

“There's a disconnect between the scientific world and the political world,” says León. “We are not accelerating science and technology in Chile in a modern way. The scientific institution that exists right now is archaic.”

Collateral Damage from Playing Politics with Zika

In the absence of federal funds, philanthropic efforts put experts on the ground to contain the Zika epidemic and protect pregnant women. But despite some success, Puerto Rico may still be the U.S. territory hardest hit by Zika and partisan bickering.

Yesterday, Tom Frieden, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Sylvia Burwell, secretary of Health and Human Services, [admitted](#) that the seven-month delay in federal funding to combat Zika – and the approval [last week](#) of only \$1.1 billion of the original \$1.9 billion – hurt efforts like vaccine development, mosquito control, and providing services for pregnant women whose babies are at risk of developing microcephaly.

"Because we've had to wait these seven months, we haven't been able to get a running start on some of the critically important studies to understand more fully the impacts of Zika, to establish better diagnostic tests, to improve our way of controlling mosquitoes," [said](#) Frieden.

In the absence of federal funds, philanthropic efforts – like one [organized](#) by the CDC Foundation and funded in part by [Pfizer](#) – put experts on the ground in Puerto Rico to help contain the epidemic by providing contraceptive access and education to women on the island. The program has so far been an early success, experts say, but time will tell. The pregnant women on the Zika-besieged island are just now giving birth, so the number of microcephalic babies born there will be one way the program's success – and the effects of federal delays – will be quantified.

I got quote from UCSF expert on the ground in PR and CDC Foundation.

CROSS SECTIONS / News & Features

Playing Politics With Zika — and the Public’s Health

Congress has dithered over emergency Zika funding for months. Experts now worry that an ebb in the outbreak could further stall pursuit of a vaccine.

08.23.2016 / BY [Aleszu Bajak](#)

1 COMMENT




 REPUBLISH 

-  Flip
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-  Tweet
-  Reddit
-  Pin

With Miami now in the midst of a [Zika outbreak](#), scientists are stepping up their calls on Congress to green-light [\\$1.9 billion in emergency funds](#) to prevent the disease’s spread. The funding has been mired in partisan bickering for months, and the delays have likely been made worse by a paralyzing and divisive presidential election. Meanwhile, experts suggest that everything from disease surveillance to mosquito control efforts are now suffering as a result of the public health politicking.



....

While Congress fiddles, experts worry that efforts to find a Zika vaccine will stall.

Visual: [iStock.com](#)

That’s bad if Zika comes raging back sometime in the future, which is exactly what happened with Ebola.

Now researchers are also publicly worrying that a Zika vaccine may never end up ready for primetime. If the epidemic peters out on its own, they say, so too might vaccine development — and that would be cause for concern.

“There is a rush to get this vaccine out and see if it works,” said Michele Barry, director of the Center for Innovation in Global Health at Stanford University and former president of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH). If federal funds don’t come through, Barry warns, the epidemic may die down before a vaccine can be fully tested and approved for use.

Common problems with pitches

Super broad

Overdone

Too small in impact or scope

Too difficult to quantify

Too complicated (to summarize in 2 sentences)

Not for my newsroom

Not enough homework

Poses a question you can't answer

A great resource



INTERVIEWS

ELEMENTS OF CRAFT ▾

PROFILES ▾

PITCH DATABASE

GETTING STARTED IN SCIENCE JOURNALISM



CLEAR ALL FILTERS

SEARCH



TYPE

- Features (149)
- News (35)
- Opinion/Commentary/Essay (3)
- News Features (2)

PUBLICATION

- Aeon (3)
- Ars Technica (1)
- Associated Press (1)
- Astronomy (1)
- Atlantic (7)

PITCH DATABASE

"Time-Bombing-the-Future"

2019 · Rebecca Altman · Opinion/Commentary/Essay · Aeon

"How Best to Treat Opioids' Youngest Sufferers? No One Knows"

2018 · Clinton Colmenares · News · Associated Press

"Picture of Health"

2018 · Paul Tullis · Feature · BioGraphic

"No, Really, Save That Placenta"

Personal

I had meant to corner you in Columbus at some point, but it never happened. Nice to see you briefly. I wanted to talk over a story idea with you.

I've got a Maine biologist who is testing a new way to conserve small ecosystems — features that are contained on one person's property, such as vernal pools or bat caves. She's working with behavioral economists to work out fair value trades and she attends town meetings (two towns in Maine) to explain her vision of a win-win strategy to conserve small wetlands and make landowners whole. To get to this point, she had to convince state and federal regulators to relax current laws to allow her method to be tested.

My knowledge

More data

My sources

News peg/ New idea

If successful, the new conservation model will become a viable alternative to current regulations across New England, under the authority of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Tasty details

Her most challenging opponent is a scattering of recalcitrant landowners in the towns who don't even want to hear about new regulations. If you've ever been to a town meeting on conservation easements or open space protections, you'll have a picture in your mind of the individuals who come to and speak up at these meetings, expounding on landowner rights and the hard life of farmers and newcomers/yuppies/cyclists who want aesthetics and frogs and don't care a whit about people.

Show you can write

My scientist, Aram Calhoun, thinks she's got an attractive option to offer them.

Does this sound like a Science story? Happy to talk it over — or to send you a fleshed out pitch.

Jill U Adams, "Pooling Resources," 2,000 words

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/pitch/pooling-resources/>

Get pitching!