

“MEET AN ASTROBIOLOGIST”: A SERIES OF SHORT, DYNAMIC VIDEO PROFILES OF ASTROBIOLOGY RESEARCHERS DESIGNED FOR GENERAL AUDIENCES. V.J. LiCata, Department of Biological Sciences, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 (licata@lsu.edu).

Abstract: In collaboration with a professional video company, a series of two to three minute videos have been produced, each of which provides a dynamic profile of the work of an astrobiologist at the Louisiana State University. The videos are fast-paced, upbeat, and designed for all audiences. Scripts were developed in collaboration with each individual scientist, and care is taken to depict the science with as much accuracy as possible. Each scientist “stars in” and narrates their own segment.

Scientists profiled are performing research on: 1) extremely radiation resistant organisms such as *Deinococcus radiodurans*, 2) bacteria that live in the Atacama desert, the Earth’s driest environment, 3) sulfidic bacteria and the origins of life, 4) bacterial microfossils, 5) biochemistry in microgravity, 6) microorganisms that live in ice and extreme cold, and 7) remote detection of water on Mars.

Footage for each segment is shot both on-location in each scientist’s own laboratory, and on greenscreen at a local movie production facility. Post production includes editing, addition of music, and addition of simple animations to illustrate some scientific points.

A basic strategic pattern for developing such videos includes several key elements: 1) show the scientist in their own lab doing and explaining some actual work, 2) visually connect the work to an extraterrestrial or exo-planet environment, 3) explain the science as accurately and clearly as possible, 4) use interesting or unusual angles or editing to sustain visual interest, 5) coach the scientists on acting as natural and playful as possible.

While only a small amount of actual science can be communicated in three minutes, the video project also strives to communicate the excitement of the research, its connection to the search for extraterrestrial life, and the personalities of the scientists themselves.