

# Science

## *The Digital Evolution of Excellence*

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“An amazing science story is an amazing human story.”

—Paula Apsell, Senior Executive Producer, *NOVA*

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In an organization known for public media firsts, science programming at WGBH is second to none. *NOVA*, our flagship science program, burst onto the public media scene with the idea that scientific discovery can make for great storytelling. In the four decades since, *NOVA* has grown to be the highest-rated science program on television and in classrooms, reaching some 50 million viewers each year—one in every six Americans—who explore our content on TV and online. *NOVA* has always been an innovator. More than two decades ago, in 1996, *NOVA* launched a series of websites that

took users on expeditions around the globe: the pyramids of Egypt, volcanic underwater ridges in the Pacific, Antarctica, and more. With real-time daily reports and interactive 360° images (the “Virtual Reality” of the day), users virtually walked through the inner chambers of Khufu’s pyramid and stood atop Mt. Everest. Twenty years later, we’re reformatting those experiences for the more than one million fans who follow us on Facebook. Twenty-first century audiences can once again experience this fascinating material using the latest VR technology.

## NOVA Expanding

Today, NOVA is not just NOVA. It's a science brand. It's also *NOVA Next*, *NOVALabs*, NOVA Education, *GROSS SCIENCE*, *The Secret Life of Scientists & Engineers*, *The Nature of Reality*, and *NOVA Wonders*. At [pbs.org/wgbh/nova](https://pbs.org/wgbh/nova), site visitors access more than 400 videos—full-length programs, shorts, teacher videos, and more. Considering the uneven quality and downright misleading scientific claims that proliferate in an ocean of media that teems with imposters and infomercials, WGBH and PBS—the nation's most trusted names in educational media—stand to gain audience as citizens increasingly seek out reliable sources and sound science.

“NOVA is not just a television program anymore,” says Paula Apsell. People watch NOVA and science short form documentaries online. They download podcasts and explore interactive environments. “The amount of money that we have to create digital assets is relatively small, yet the importance of digital publishing is enormous,” she says. “Unrestricted funds allow us to innovate and expand our digital presence so we are reaching younger audiences who do not watch television. It's a key part of our ambition.”

How WGBH science reaches today's audiences is changing, and this capital campaign intends to address that change. We will be the preeminent open media forum for exploring and learning about the science and discourse our daily lives are immersed in—everything from climate science and water engineering to the age of the universe and the nature of time.

## Evolving Attitudes, New Stories

Until recently, the sciences had largely been excused from the American political debate. Increasingly, however, scientific findings can put powerful interests at odds with the public good. There are those who challenge the findings of respected scientists, who challenge the respect of science itself. In this media landscape, WGBH maintains its position as an advocate of scientific inquiry, scientific media, and learning. By continuing to tell the important stories of science from all over the world, WGBH will keep exploring the world around and within us.

A new NOVA production, *Poisoned Water*, tells the story of Flint, Michigan, where thousands of children were exposed to lead in the water supply. In the process, the program explores how water appears in the tap of millions of Americans and the importance of public understanding of science in making sure it is clean and safe to drink.

Bringing attention to species extinction, another new program, *Rare*, follows a wildlife photographer as he captures images of endangered species around the globe. “It represents a new kind of hybrid programming that addresses the science of extinction and the human impact on endangered animal species,” says Denise DiIanni, Senior Executive in Charge of Content Development and Director of Studio Six, which produced *Rare*.

Projects such as these push our science filmmakers, producers, and media specialists ever further. They require teams of videographers to travel to the ends of the earth. They bring together storytellers with science content experts to get the story and the science right. They produce for multiple platforms simultaneously and strategically.

To continue to expand the reach of our storytelling, this new kind of production model calls for ready access to capital to take full advantage of the right mix of science, story, and strategy. That is how we will reach the greatest number of citizens with the most important and engaging scientific stories.

## Boston—Natural Habitat for Science Media Leadership

The Science Media Awards and Summit, better known as SMASH, is hosted by WGBH at our headquarters on Guest Street. This biannual event brings together top scientists and science media makers to engage on the most critical scientific issues of today.

Recent summits have attracted more than 300 science media stakeholders, including leading scientists from such institutions as MIT, Harvard, Yale, and Berkeley, who present findings in ways that promote active audience engagement. Funding enables us to bring a diverse class of SMASH Fellows to the event, such as media makers from BBC, NHK Japan, Sweden, Israel, Australia, and the U.S. Support helps us expand this important conference of scientists, science media luminaries, and thought leaders in Boston.

## The Science of Never Satisfied

To thrive in the digital century will require the flexibility to reach and inspire our audiences wherever they watch, engage, and learn about science. The story of science will never be finished. At WGBH, our relentless pursuit of the best ways to tell that story will continue to take us into uncharted territory, always safeguarding the trust we have, and always in the public interest and discourse.

