

Scientific (Astro) Journalism Activities in Armenia

L. Darbinyan*, A. Mickaelian[†] and S. Farmanyan[‡]

NAS RA Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory after V. A. Ambartsumian, Armenia

Abstract

The significant media achievements of BAO are the result of dedicated efforts by its team of young and experienced scientists, whose passion for astronomy continues to inspire society. By combining transparent, creative, and strategic communication, BAO has built strong local and international visibility, serving as a bridge between past scientific milestones and future discoveries.

Keywords: *outreach, journalism, astronomy education, scientific literacy.*

Introduction

In recent years, the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) has significantly enhanced its media presence, promoted not only the achievements of Armenian astronomy but also fostered public interest in science. Through a strategic focus on scientific journalism, BAO has positioned itself as a key player in making astronomy accessible to both national and international audiences. This article presents an overview of BAO's media activities, including collaborations with journalists, social media engagement, and initiatives aimed at building a strong culture of science communication in Armenia.

The mass media strategy of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) is shaped by a dynamic and inclusive vision of science communication, where the emphasis goes beyond mere education to fostering a meaningful connection between the public and the cosmos. Inspired by the outreach principles promoted by the IAU's South West and Central Asia Regional Office of Astronomy for Development, BAO aims to bring astronomy to diverse audiences by meeting them where they are, be it through in-person events, online platforms, or collaborations with local communities. Rather than remaining confined within institutional walls, BAO adopts a mobile and responsive approach, ensuring that its messages resonate across both individual and collective settings. This aligns with evolving models of science communication that prioritize engagement, accessibility, and emotional connection, helping the public not only learn about science but also experience it as a natural part of their daily lives.

BAO's Media Strategy

The foundation of BAO's media work is built upon several core objectives:

- **Making astronomy accessible to the public**
- **Increasing the visibility of Armenian science at national and international levels**
- **Inspiring the next generation through engaging science stories**
- **Building trust and transparency between scientists and society**

By sharing scientific achievements, discoveries, and events through various platforms, the BAO bridges the gap between research and society, ensuring that the excitement of astronomy reaches beyond the scientific community.

*lilit.darbinyan7@gmail.com

[†]aregmick@yahoo.com

[‡]sona.farmanyan@mail.ru

BAO Website and Media Sections

The official BAO website serves as a central hub for scientific news and public information. It features dedicated sections for (<https://www.bao.am/index.php>):

- **Press Releases:** Since March 2019, the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) has been regularly publishing press releases over 100 each year covering a wide range of topics related to astronomy and the scientific and educational work of the BAO. These releases are published in Armenian and often in English, shared on the official BAO website and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and also circulated to journalists interested in science. Covering scientific discoveries, events, seminars, and public science articles. From May 2024 to May 2025, BAO published 78 press releases (<https://www.bao.am/pr/2025/pr2025.php>).
- **Interviews:** Highlighting personal stories and research insights from BAO scientists. Since 2019, BAO has launched a series of interviews focusing on a wide range of significant topics that are both relevant to the general public and often underrepresented in mainstream discussions. These interviews aim to spark interest in science and make complex subjects more accessible, helping to bridge the gap between researchers and a wider audience (<https://www.bao.am/interviews/interviews.php>).
- **Mass Media Coverage:** A collection of news articles and reports from Armenian and international media outlets about BAO activities (<https://www.bao.am/massmedia/massmedia.php>).
- **Press Conferences:** Organized events to promote BAO's scientific achievements with media participation (<https://www.bao.am/massmedia/pressconference.php>).
- **Documentary Films:** Original productions showcasing BAO's astronomers, historical milestones, and the legacy of Armenian astrophysics (<https://www.bao.am/massmedia/movies.php>).

ArAS Newsletters

As an active contributor to the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS) newsletters (<https://www.aras.am/>), BAO shares regular updates, research highlights, and educational content with the wider astronomy community. The ArAS Newsletter is the official newsletter of the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS), serving as a key communication tool within the Armenian and international astronomical community. Here is a detailed overview:

What is the ArAS Newsletter? The ArAS Newsletter is a regularly published bulletin that highlights:

- Scientific research by Armenian astronomers (in Armenia and abroad)
- Institutional and member news from Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) and other Armenian institutions
- Reports on local and international astronomical events and conferences
- Announcements of fellowships, schools, grants, and job opportunities
- Educational and outreach activities in Armenia
- Historical and biographical articles on Armenian astronomers
- Observational reports and new findings
- Updates from the Armenian Virtual Observatory (ArVO)

Social Media and Global Reach

Recognizing the power of social media, BAO (<https://www.facebook.com/Byurakan>, https://www.instagram.com/bao.am_official/) has expanded its online presence to engage audiences worldwide. Through consistent content, visual materials, and interactive formats, BAO strengthens its global visibility and connects with science enthusiasts across borders.

Astrojournalism Competition

In line with fostering a culture of science communication, BAO organizes the annual **Astrojournalism Competition**, aimed at:

- Promoting effective science communication
- Building a bridge between scientists and journalists
- Recognizing and motivating journalists for their contribution to science awareness
- Raising public understanding of astronomical research and achievements
- Supporting the development of a strong media culture around astronomy

Competition Categories:

- Best original print or online article or article series
- Best original audio/video material (short films, radio/TV programs, podcasts)
- Most active science journalist of the year

This initiative has become a vital tool in encouraging accurate and inspiring media coverage of astronomy.

Astrophotography Competition

The Astrophotography Competition is another creative project that connects science with art. Its objectives include:

- Sparking public interest in astronomy through visual storytelling
- Increasing high-quality visual content about BAO and its telescopes
- Promoting astro-tourism in Armenia
- Attracting media attention and tourists
- Showcasing the beauty of the Armenian night sky and BAO's iconic telescopes

Collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences Press Center

BAO collaborates closely with the Press Center of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia (NAS RA), ensuring:

- Joint publication of press releases
- Broad promotion of scientific discoveries
- Media coverage of educational and scientific activities held at BAO

This partnership amplifies the outreach of Armenian science, strengthening national visibility.

Community of Journalists

BAO highly values its cooperation with the Armenian journalism community. Over the years, a dedicated group of journalists with an interest in science and astronomy has emerged. BAO maintains active engagement with these professionals by sharing updates, event invitations, and media opportunities, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between scientists and the media.

BAO visibility at international level

BAO is a unique research institute in Armenia interesting to the international mass media community. Journalists and mass media from various countries has published or released materials on BAO's activities, including those from the following 15 countries:

- USA
- France
- Italy
- Germany
- Finland
- Russia
- South Africa
- Kazakhstan
- Lebanon
- Australia
- Georgia
- Iran
- Romania
- Switzerland

Conclusion

The significant media achievements of BAO are the result of dedicated efforts by its team of young and experienced scientists, whose passion for astronomy continues to inspire society. By combining transparent, creative, and strategic communication, BAO has built strong local and international visibility, serving as a bridge between past scientific milestones and future discoveries.

Through collaborative projects, competitions, and outreach initiatives, BAO not only promotes Armenian astronomy but also contributes to the development of science journalism and public engagement in Armenia.

References

- Asryan M. A., Farmanyan S. V., Mickaelian A. M., 2022, [Communications of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory](#), 69, 122
- Asryan M., Darbinyan L., Farmanyan S., Baleyan G., Mickaelian A., 2023, in EAS2023, European Astronomical Society Annual Meeting. p. 1232
- Asryan M. A., Farmanyan S. V., Mickaelian A. M., 2024, [Communications of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory](#), 71, 174
- Baleyan G., Farmanyan S., Davtyan A., Patatanyan A., Mickaelian A., 2023, in EAS2023, European Astronomical Society Annual Meeting. p. 1365
- Baleyan G. D., Farmanyan S. V., Davtyan A. K., Mickaelian A. M., 2024, [Communications of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory](#), 71, 162