



Inspiration Dissemination

Forestry graduate student Joey Hulbert shares OSU research through award-winning KBVR science radio show

by Bryan Bernart

Joey Hulbert, a graduate student in the WSE Department, walks through an otherwise quiet wing of Snell Hall, preparing for a broadcast. KBVR-FM, located on its second floor, comprises only a cozy one-room studio space filled with microphones and turntables, but the students working there ensure that, despite its modest appearance, KBVR remains a broadcasting powerhouse, filling the airwaves on channel 88.7 FM around the clock. It's just after 6:30 PM on Sunday night, which means that "Inspiration Dissemination," the nationally recognized radio program hosted by Hulbert and Zhian Kamvar, another OSU graduate student, will go live in less than half an hour.

"When we first started out, back in early 2012, we were really just dragging our friends in," says Hulbert, laughing, as he explains the genesis of ID. "There wasn't much of a plan. We sat them down and said, 'Hey, we're going to talk to you about your research for 10 or 15 minutes, so... what do

you do?'" Despite his irreverent tone, Hulbert came to KBVR with several years of college radio experience under his belt, having worked for Washington State's KZUU while completing his bachelor's degree. Following that, when he was applying to graduate schools, Hulbert had to write essays with topics like "How are you going to create a broader impact through your research?" As he says, "It just clicked for me that maybe I should start talking about science on the radio and reach out to more people, and help others communicate scientific information."

In its current format, ID runs for roughly half an hour once a week. Each episode features a different graduate student guest, always from a scientific field. Guests discuss their research, their experiences prior to beginning in their respective programs, and why their work is important. Guests also relate advice to undergraduates who may be listening to the program. Across campus, over 34 departments, including the College of Forestry's own FERM, WSE, and FES, have been represented so far.

So, who listens to ID? “Our target audience is undergraduate students, who might catch our show while driving around Corvallis. We hope that they overhear some of the conversation and come away from listening feeling inspired,” says Hulbert. “But we believe the majority of our listeners are actually other graduate students—they’re interested in the human element of the program, meaning the common experiences that grad students go through, as much as the research.” He explains that to build listenership, the program archives many of its shows on its website, where they’re available for download (<http://oregonstate.edu/inspiration/Episodes>). “We’re fortunate to have an undergrad helper who creates podcasts from our material. It’s interesting to look through the statistics generated; one of our programs has over 2,000 listens.”

In the scant two and a half years since its inception, ID has not only garnered national recognition, having been recently honored by the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System and winning its award for “most innovative program,” but, perhaps even more notably, actually helped its listeners win recognition and additional funding of their own. Jeremy Hoffman, a CEOAS PhD student in Geology, was a guest on the show in 2013 and discussed a major grant he received for his research. Following his appearance on ID, he posted his grant application on the program’s website so that other students could see what he had written. Hulbert says that some time later, he was approached by two undergraduate students who told him that they had followed Hoffman’s advice and won grants of their own.

Speaking about opportunities afforded to graduate students via their participation with ID, Hulbert says that the program allows them to practice communicating to a broad audience—an important and often overlooked facet of graduate-level academia. “Every episode we have, we see how difficult it is to explain the

research very basically,” he says. “I think the most fulfilling part of the show, for me, is seeing students struggle to communicate their research in a way the audience can comprehend. For a lot of our guests, this is their first introduction to media. When they come in, we say ‘give me your elevator pitch,’ and many find it difficult. We hope, though, that every student who comes away from our program has a better idea of how to do that in the future.”

In his own upcoming plans, Hulbert intends to continue working in science communication. “Personally, creating and co-hosting ID has affected me to the point where, even if I’m not doing science podcasting, specifically, I’d like to be doing something similar.” He motions to Kamvar, who has continued prepping the show, which is now about to begin. “We love it. We enjoy doing it, and we think that, wherever we each end up after grad school, we’ll continue in one form or another, provided there’s a radio station that will have us.”

The program begins. This week’s guest takes a seat in front of the microphone, and Hulbert and Kamvar introduce him, their voices carried across the airwaves to unknown listeners near and far. “Inspiration Dissemination” is live.

Foresters in Action

“Inspiration Dissemination” continues the legacy of forestry students taking to the airwaves to talk about science and student life. In the 1930s, a group of students led by Arthur Harold Sasser (’40) created a weekly radio program called “Foresters In Action,” which combined amusing anecdotes, scientific discussion, humor, and even live music, to both educate and entertain the student body. You can read a collection of their original radio scripts online here:

<http://hdl.handle.net/1957/50349>.

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reached a lot of underserved groups within our community. We also host a STEM Academy (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) for high school students where they can learn about new field-oriented subjects. There are also mountain-biking and trail-running events that occur in our Forests, which, combined with a number of guided hikes, allow for plenty to do over the summer. In the fall, we allow some deer and elk hunting for those hunters who draw a tag for the Dunn Forest.

Of course, even if people are not interested in these larger events, they can always come out and visit the Forests on their own. We have a number of trails that have interpretive signs and allow you to learn at your own pace. There’s something for everyone—come outside and see!

For more about the College Forests, visit:
cf.forestry.oregonstate.edu