

What journalists think of CCS, coverage patterns, and what they need to know before covering it



Emily C. Moskal

Gulf Coast Carbon Center, Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin

Problem

DOE's Regional Carbon Sequestration Partnerships initiative has spent \$400 million over 14 years to conduct technical and outreach on CCS across the US. This work has led to consequential and relevant technical outcomes. However, press coverage has been limited. What are the factors that limit media interest in this topic? And are there lessons to be learned that could make outcomes more worthy of coverage in the future? The gaps in and areas of emphases shown by media outlets demonstrate to researchers what needs to be better or more frequently communicated. A qualitative survey of journalists of varying degrees of knowledge was conducted to elucidate what researchers can do to ensure that their research is communicated effectively to impact media, and indirectly, public perception. The media plays a key role in shaping public perception and policy agendas by strengthening or weakening a particular point of view (Suhay, 2017).

Planned Outcome if Successful

- Understand general patterns of coverage
- Understand what influences a journalist's decision to cover a CCS story
- Understand what preconceptions exist about the technology
- Initiate a lasting interaction with press contacts

Methods

- The gaps in and areas of emphases shown by media outlets was exhibited through a media analysis that demonstrates to researchers what needs to be better or more frequently communicated.
- A qualitative survey of journalists of varying degrees of knowledge was conducted to elucidate what researchers can do to ensure that their research is communicated effectively to impact media, and indirectly, public perception.

Figures and Results

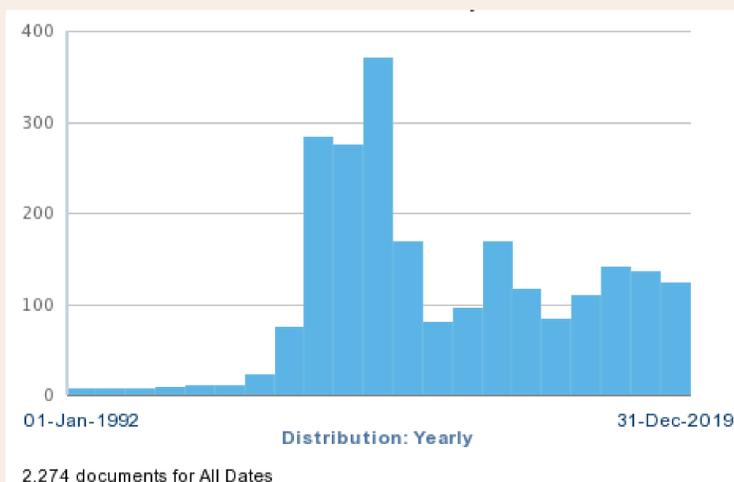
PHONE INTERVIEWS WITH JOURNALISTS

"...there have been a few big failures in the US so I think **reporters like myself are waiting for something to work** technically and financially **before writing about it.**"

"**energy inefficient...uneconomic fix...similar downsides as fracking...I haven't covered this beat in about 7 years.**"

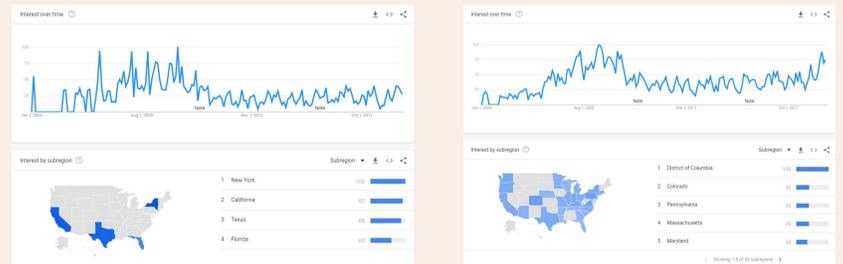
FACTIVA TRENDS

Searchable and sortable database of media coverage shows the number of media articles mentioning CCS



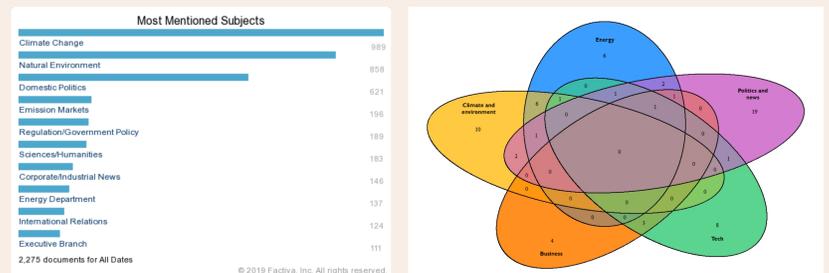
GOOGLE TRENDS

What Google users search which is a gauge of the general public's interest

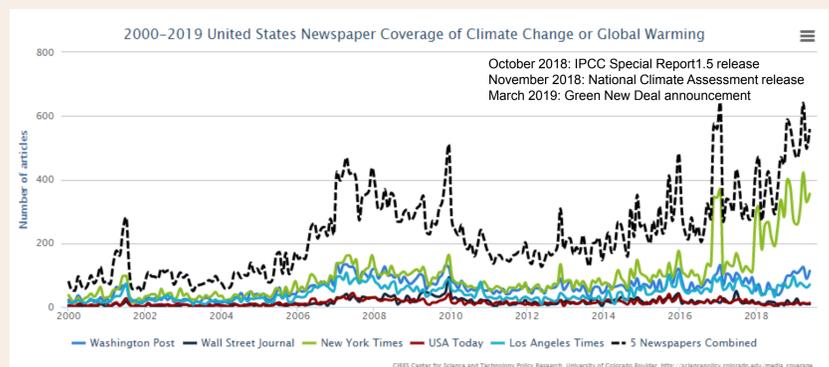


FACTIVA ARTICLE FREQUENCY BY TOPIC

Climate is the most common news frame for CCS



GENERAL (NOT JUST CCS) CLIMATE COVERAGE PEAKS



Results & Next Steps

- The most media interest in CCS occurred in 2008-2009.
- Since then, the coverage has had a steep decline and plateaued. Coverage had trended negative until the recent surge in interest in direct air capture in the past year (Carbon Engineering/Climeworks)
- This appears to be due to an informational positive feedback loop of journalists referring to old articles rather than having access to targeted media briefings on the latest in research updates.
- The area with the most reporter influence is for those who work on engineering, technology, and who have not heard of CCS...which, for better or for worse, is many.
- Conduct larger, quantitative survey or study bias in science journalism
- Editors and journalists interested in several article ideas pitched
- "Recent Advances in Carbon Capture and Storage Research" report targeted to media to fill knowledge gaps since bulk coverage in 2009.

Acknowledgments

Funded by the DOE/NETL-funded SECARB project of GCCC (DE-FC26-05NT42590). Thank you to Susan Hovorka for the idea and project encouragement.

References

Boykoff, M., Daly, M., McAllister, L., McNatt, M., Nacu-Schmidt, A., Oonk, D., and Pearman, O. (2019). United States Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming, 2000-2019. Media and Climate Change Observatory Data Sets. Center for Science and Technology Policy Research, Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, University of Colorado. doi.org/10.2581/jck1-hf50

Suhay, E. (2017). The Politics of Scientific Knowledge. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.107