

DR. FANIE VAN ROOYEN

BA, MA, PhD

Dr. Fanie van Rooyen is a science and technology communication specialist with two decades of experience spanning science journalism, strategic science outreach and ethical science communication research.

As Research and Communications Consultant at the Institute for Methods Innovation (IMI), he leads communications and engagement strategies across IMI's portfolio of social research projects and capacity-building initiatives, including several multi-country programs funded by the European Commission, including HYPOP, FEMLEAD and REMHub.

As a science communication specialist, Dr. van Rooyen drives the reach and usability of social research. He designs and delivers communication strategies that showcase IMI's advances in methodological innovation, research capacity building, and evidence-informed practice. He leads the dissemination and engagement components of complex, multi-partner projects, ensuring that new methods and findings are accessible to varied audiences. He holds an MA and PhD in Science Journalism from Stellenbosch University.

CAREER HISTORY

Relevant Highlights

2024 - Present **Research and Communications Consultant** | *Institute for Methods Innovation*

2022 - Present **Editor** | *QUEST (Science magazine), SSAf*

In early 2022, Dr. van Rooyen was appointed by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) as the editor for their quarterly magazine, QUEST, aimed to communicate science to South Africa's youth.

2022 – 2024 **Head of Content & Editorial** | *Agri Voice*

Between 2017 and 2024, Dr. van Rooyen was Editor and later Head of Content & Editorial at Agri Voice, a leading agricultural media company, where he was responsible for all editorial staff and content across multiple platforms – online video (Agri TV), a daily-updated mobile app news feed (Agri Voice App), a podcast, email newsletters and various digital magazines.

2015 – Present **Freelance writer & social media manager**

As a freelance science writer, Dr. van Rooyen has written several features for Popular Mechanics magazine, including topics such as the evolution of El Niño due to climate change, the development of quantum cryptography for computer security, the “future society” design of the Olympic Village for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and the incredible implications of CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing.

He has also done writing and social media management for the University of Pretoria (through a company called ScienceLink), travel and lifestyle writing for

various in-flight magazines, and social media management for the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Evolutionary Studies Institute (ESI), AI Directions in Dubai and for the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences.

2017 - 2022 **Editor** | *AgriConnect*

2015 **Senior Research Communications Practitioner** | *CSIR*

A keen interest in science and technology led Dr. van Rooyen to a contracted communications position at the CSIR, where he was tasked both with the external communication of the CSIR's research efforts to media and stakeholders via the ScienceScope publication, as well as internal communication activities within the CSIR.

2006 - 2014 **Journalist** | *Beeld newspaper (Media24)*

Starting his career as a hard news journalist, Dr. van Rooyen had the opportunity over nine years to write on the entire spectrum of news beats – general news, crime, science and technology, health, the military, courts, human interest, protests, politics, the environment and the weather. From trigger-happy Paralympic athletes (the Oscar Pistorius story, for which he was awarded “Scoop of the year” by Media24) to in-depth features on the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) radio telescope, and everything in between.

EDUCATION

2019 - 2022 **PhD Science Journalism**

Stellenbosch University | Stellenbosch, South Africa

In 2022, Dr. van Rooyen completed his PhD on the ethical communication of disruptive, revolutionary emerging technologies like Bitcoin, AI and human gene editing to the public. For his dissertation, he created a new media ethics theory – The Flaming Torch Media Ethics Theory – and, as its practical outflow, the Ten Tenets Field Guide for ethical communication of emerging science and technologies.

The core principle of the theory holds that, “Like a flaming torch in the hand, any new technology or scientific discovery can either light the way in the darkness, or burn the whole forest down. Often both. Therefore, any attempt at communicating new discoveries and technologies shares in the weight of that responsibility.”

2013 - 2016 **MA Journalism**

Stellenbosch University | Stellenbosch, South Africa

Dr. van Rooyen's Master's thesis, for which he received the highest mark for his year, was concerned with how, and by whom, science news breaks and spreads on Twitter in real-time.

2005 **BPhil. Hons. Journalism**

Stellenbosch University | Stellenbosch, South Africa

2002 – 2004

BA Social Sciences

Stellenbosch University | Stellenbosch, South Africa

GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS

FEMLEAD: Fostering fEMale participation and LEADership in open science initiatives

European Commission Erasmus+

Budget: €400,000 | www.femlead.eu

REMHUB: Rare Earth and Magnets Hub for a resilient Europe

European Commission Horizon Europe IA (2024-)

Budget: €16,000,000 | www.remhub-project.eu

ATLIC: Atlantic InnoBlue Communities

Interreg Atlantic Area | Co-funded by the European Union

Budget: €3,500,000 | www.atlic.eu

Hypop: HYdrOgen Public OPiniOn and acceptance

European Commission Horizon2020 Innovation Action (2023-)

Budget: €1,062,755 | www.hypop-project.eu

ACHIEVEMENTS

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| 2001 | Matriculated (HS Die Wilgers) with two distinctions (English and Biology). Other subjects (all Higher Grade) and symbols are: Afrikaans (B), Maths (B), Computer Studies (C), Natural Sciences (C). |
| 2004 | Chosen, after a general knowledge test and two extensive interviews, for the B.Phil. Honors (Journalism) course for the year 2005. Only 23 students out of around 600 applicants are allowed entry into the program. |
| 2004 | Awarded a Media24-bursary for the honors program. |
| 2006 - 2014 | Various front-page stories, scoops & headlining news features for the leading daily newspaper <i>Beeld</i> . |
| 2010 | First column ("Want dit is 'n veel erger vrees", <i>Beeld</i> 2010-05-31) written for <i>Beeld</i> , receives over 7,000 hits on the <i>Beeld.com</i> website on the first day it is published – the second most hits for any column published on the site up until that point. |

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| 2011 | Requested by his editor to enter the South African National Press Club Hard News Journalist of the Year competition, receiving favorable feedback from the judges. |
| 2011 | Nominated by his editor for a two-week Media Course for African Journalists hosted in New Delhi, India, by the Indian Institute for Mass Communication. |
| 2011 | Entered the Mondi Shanduka Newspaper Awards and received a “Commended” certificate for the front page entry “Sy wou Blou Bul vermoor” (Beeld 2010-11-19) about Manda Reyneke, a woman who hired two Nigerian hitmen to have a prominent rugby player murdered. |
| 2013 | Entered the Media24 Legends Awards and was awarded “Scoop of the year” for the tweet that broke the Oscar Pistorius story. |
| 2013 | Received a Media24-bursary to complete his Master’s degree. |
| 2014 | <i>Beeld</i> ’s core editorial team responsible for breaking the Oscar Pistorius story together win the “Multiplatform” and “Story of the Year” awards at the Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards. |
| 2017 - 2024 | <i>Red Meat/Rooivleis</i> magazine selected as a finalist for Best External Magazine during the 2016 South African Publication Forum (SAPF) Awards, and both <i>Red Meat/Rooivleis</i> and <i>Wolboer/Wool Farmer</i> magazines receive several certificates of merit for writing, communication and design in subsequent years (while being editor at AgriConnect/Agri Voice). |
| 2019 | Awarded a Censcom bursary to complete his PhD in science journalism. |
| 2022 | Promoted from editor to Head of Content & Editorial at AgriConnect/Agri Voice. |
| 2022 | Completion of PhD in science journalism (December graduation). |

COURSES AND ADDITIONAL TRAINING

- One year (2006) on-the-job internship at *Beeld* newspaper (rotated through different editorial divisions for a month at a time) which led to permanent employment.
- Photography Masterclass (February 2009) presented as a road trip through the Rajasthan state of India in 2009 by world-renowned photojournalists Gary Knight (VII Photo Agency) and Phillip Blenkinsop (Noor Images).
- Courses on Advanced Feature Writing (September 2010), including new media and online journalism (Twitter, Facebook, Blogging), Advanced Sub-editing (May 2012) and Advanced Data Journalism (2013) completed at the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) at Wits University.
- Media Course for African Journalists (two weeks) focusing on journalism in developing nations, presented in New Delhi, India, by the Indian Institute for Mass Communication (IIMC).
- Two-week intensive Multimedia Course designed especially for Media24 and presented by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ).

- Attended a three-day workshop for scientists and journalists at the University of Stellenbosch to promote better science communication (2011).
- Completed a Portfolio of Evidence (POE) assignment as designed for Media24 in order to gain the nationally recognised multimedia MAPPP-SETA qualification.
- Completed 8 flying hours of training for a Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) at the Stellenbosch Flying Club (interrupted for the time being by the birth of his daughter Emma).