

Panel 8, Bio-note

Abigail Foerstner co-directs health, environment and science journalism in the career-focused, graduate program at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications. Her students learn to make science accessible to general audiences who have a critical stake in understanding medical options and fast-paced innovation in fields such as nanotechnology. Students publish stories with the Medill News Service and media partners through Medill's newsrooms. Foerstner initiated an embedded reporting program where graduate journalism students join field research teams to follow the retreat of the glaciers in Mongolia, challenge drought in India with "pop-up" greenhouses, track storm triggers on the Great Plains or mine the secrets of the universe at CERN. They return from the field to produce and pitch stories to major media. Foerstner's own embedded reporting brings her each summer to the excavations at Cahokia, the greatest Ancient American metropolis in North America where a 1,000-year-old earthen pyramid still rises to a 100-foot pinnacle. Her research is for a book – already under contract - to bring the story of culture and climate change past and present home to our own backyards. Her previous books include the biography, "James Van Allen: The First Eight Billion Miles," a fresh, fast-paced look at the dawn of the space race when Van Allen and rocket pioneer Wernher von Braun matched wits on America's first satellite after Sputnik beat the U.S. into orbit. Foerstner's 40-year career as a journalist began when she initiated science and environmental coverage as a staff reporter for regional sections of the Chicago Tribune and received awards for investigative and environmental reporting.