Citizen Science Projects

" Citizen Science (CS) projects aim to **actively involve citizen volunteers in scientific processes** alongside scientists, in particular in data collection and subject classification. To this end, the hypertext design of these projects relies on the affordances of the internet, namely modularity, multimodality, and interactivity.

The two **social exigences** that determine the way these online texts are constructed are the following:

- the democratisation of science
- the promotion of scientific literacy

In online projects content is is organised into **text modules or text blocks**. Each online project has its own homepage, which displays a tagline with a direct request for help to the citizens. This homepage may have a menu of related content (e.g., a page describing the context of the project, a page describing the research team, and a page explaining the results of the project. These projects integrate **interactive tools** so that the citizen volunteers can complete the tasks and interact with the scientists.

The **main communicative functions** of language in citizen science projects are 1) to convey credibility and trust in science (and in the research team leading the project), and 2) to encourage citizens to participate in scientific tasks.

Scientists use **language** in two ways:

- **Construct a professional identity**: this helps scientists to build credibility and trust in scientific research.
- **Create proximity with citizens**: interpersonal language resources (for example, the use of first and second personal pronouns, inclusive we-pronouns and stance expressions).

Information is given in **plain language**, with limited use of scientific jargon. Plain language is also used to give **instructions** to the citizens. Some platforms also display **pop-up texts** with further information (tutorials, field guides, ...) to help citizens in the classification process. In short, authors make the content simple and at the same time personal and persuasively appealing.

Click to access two examples from Zooniverse, one of the largest CS platform:

- https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/kelseyswieca/plankton-portal
- https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/bcosentino/squirrelmapper

Visual aids (e.g., images, photographs, charts, tables, YouTube videos, …) are very important in these projects, as they help citizens to better understand what the project is about and how they can participate in it.

Finally, the content of online CS projects can be **internally hyperlinked** to related content within the site, for example to other pages, subpages or modular texts. Content can also be externally hyperlinked to other sources, such as the project's blog and social media, or to scientific publications, corporate websites, or technical reports, among others.

If you are a scientist and want to launch a citizen science project, please read the guidelines provided by CS platforms and you will find it very easy to launch a CS project.

Related publications:

Luzón, M.J. & Pérez-Llantada, C. (2022). *Digital genres in academic knowledge production and communication: Perspectives and practices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Pérez-Llantada, C. & M.-J. Luzón (2022). *Genre networks. Intersemiotic relations in digital science communication*. New York/Oxon: Routledge.

Pérez-Llantada, C. (2023). 'Help us better understand our changing climate': Exploring the discourse of Citizen Science. *Discourse & Communication*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/17504813231158927