

# Ask Me Anything About Using Reddit AMAs for Science Communication



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What is a Reddit?

How can Reddit be used for science communication?

What are the benefits of sharing your research on Reddit?

# What is Reddit?

Reddit is an interactive social news website with 70 million monthly users who submit and rate content.

Reddit is referred to as an Internet firehose: a repository of the good, the bad, the silly and the shocking.

# What is a Reddit Ask Me Anything?

- A subset of Reddit, AMA, allows people to share their expertise through an online question and answer session.
- An AMA is like a town-hall meeting with people shouting out questions to the host.
- AMAs are usually about something uncommon that plays a central role in your life, or an interesting and unique event.

“I am Barack Obama,  
President of the  
United States – AMA.”



“I am Neil deGrasse Tyson. AMA.”



“[Reddit is] a raging community of people with boundless curiosity.”

“Bill Murray  
here: OKAY, I’ll  
talk! I’ll talk!”



“Hi. We’re Craig Aumack and Andy Juhl, marine biologists currently doing research in the Arctic. Ask us anything!”







## Hi We're Craig Aumack and Andy Juhl, marine biologists currently doing research in the high Arctic. Ask Us Anything! (self.IAmA)

submitted 10 months ago\* by CraigAumack

My name is Craig Aumack and I'm a scientist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Currently, I'm on a National Science Foundation funded field expedition in the Arctic Circle, based out of Barrow, Alaska. My research team includes Lamont-Doherty colleagues Andy Juhl and Rebecca Fowler, and graduate student Kyle Kinzler from Arizona State University.

I study organisms that live in and just below Arctic sea ice to ascertain their contribution to marine food webs. These organisms comprise the base of the polar web, feeding larger marine organisms like fish, seals and whales. This information may provide a clearer understanding of the relationship among sea ice and communities in a changing Arctic ecosystem.

We're here to answer questions about our research, what it's like to live and work at an Arctic field camp and any other questions you may have.


### Verification


1. Our project website: <http://lifeintheice.wordpress.com/> and our posts on Columbia University's Earth Institute blog: <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/tag/arctic-sea-ice-ecology/>
2. Juhl/Aumack lab website: <http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/~andyjuhl/Welcome.html>
3. Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory website: <https://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/>
4. Lamont-Doherty on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LamontEarth> (use the hashtag #LDEOarctic to find tweets related to our project)

Edit: Thank you all so much for your questions and interest in our research. We're stepping down from the computer and heading back out into the field. To learn more about this project and follow our progress in the Arctic, visit our website and blog: <https://lifeintheice.wordpress.com/>


199 comments share


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 [-] [Gravy-Leg\\_\\_](#) 7 points 10 months ago

 How do you sample the microorganisms? Is contamination an issue you have to deal with?


[permalink](#)

 [-] [CraigAumack](#) [S] 8 points 10 months ago

 We drill and section certain parts of the ice cores and allow them to melt in filtered seawater. This helps the organisms deal with the salinity shock that comes from melting a sea-ice core by itself. Once the core is melted, we sample the water for microorganisms. We are always concerned about contaminating our samples.


[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] [qrstu4](#) 7 points 10 months ago

 As a mechanical engineer, is it possible for me to get involved in marine biology as a research assistant or similar? I would be good at collecting and analyzing technical data but obviously no knowledge of biology.


[permalink](#)

 [-] [CraigAumack](#) [S] 7 points 10 months ago\*

 I have seen many engineers work side-by-side with marine biologists on various projects. These usually involve ROVs, sub-surface data recording devices, or automated water/benthic samplers. I would suggest looking into positions in Ocean Engineering or Resident Technician positions on research vessels.


[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] [wesleyt89](#) 7 points 10 months ago

 Do you ride whales to get from point A to point B more efficiently?

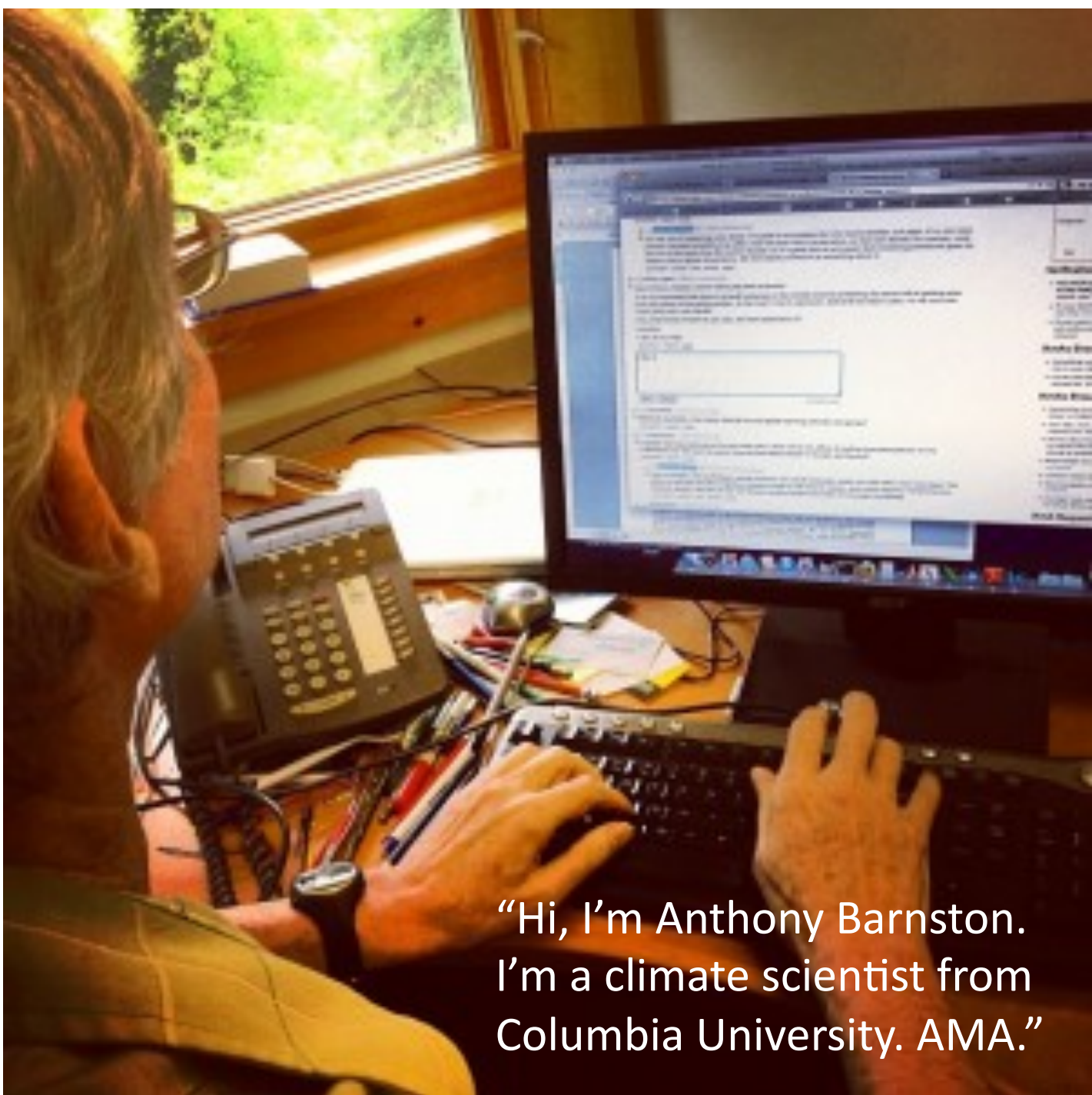
[permalink](#)

 [-] [Unidan](#) 4 points 10 months ago\*

 Hi guys!

I'm an ecosystem ecologist, and this work sounds really interesting! Apologies for all the questions, but I'm extremely interested!

- Are there Little Auks where you guys work?
- From your marine food webs, would you be able to identify a single "keystone" organism?
- I feel like DOC would be a cool thing to measure for you guys, do you examine that? If so, what lab techniques are you guys using for quantifying DOC?
- When you take an ice core, do you have to preserve it in a single block, or can you guys break it up and put it into baggies?



“Hi, I’m Anthony Barnston.  
I’m a climate scientist from  
Columbia University. AMA.”



“I am a young, tenured, female engineering professor at a major research university. AMA!”

# Why do an AMA?

- Get comfortable talking about your research in a low stress environment (plus, lots of time to think about your answers)
- Provide the public a window into the world of research
- Broaden your impact -- for free
- Amplify your other outreach efforts

# Mechanics of Doing an AMA

Doing an AMA requires:

- An internet connection
- A Reddit account
- Proof of your identity
- At least two hours of your time

# Tips for a Successful AMA

- Think about what makes you + your work unique
- Set aside enough time
- Promote it: social media + other channels
- Keep your answers informative and succinct
- Be yourself
- Expect some criticism and/or challenging questions
- Don't feel like you have to answer every question

# Scientists Say...

"I think this is one of the best methods for broadening outreach impacts. In our AMA, we had questions from fellow scientists, college students, elementary school kids, as well as adults not professionally involved in science."

-- Craig Aumack

"Overall, I liked doing it and would like to do another. I would encourage other scientists to give it a try."

-- Tony Barnston



# AMA Participants Say...

“Just wanted to say how great your Reddit AMA segment was. Really good to have people like you on those sorts of forums.”

“Truly amazing work you two have been doing. Please keep it up.”

“Excuse my language, but you’re f-ing awesome and a huge inspiration.”

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