**URMA 2015 RECAP**

Amy Schlesing, University of Arkansas

Two main themes thread their way through the Georgia Tech URMA Conference this year: Storytelling and Change.

Maryn McKenna, Pete Ludovice, Lew Lefton and Mary Loftus reminded us that the key to strategic communications and good storytelling is through flexibility of thought. Details matter. Engaging the senses in writing engages the emotions in readers. Science can be funny. Stories can be told many ways and being the first one to tell the story isn’t always the most important thing.

And Paige Brown Jarreau and Kathryn Jepsen reminded us that good storytelling isn’t always a matter of length. Storytelling through social media allows us to enhance longer stories by bringing more attention to them and driving discussions. Social media is an instrumental tool in research communications, as it motivates and directs readers to content as well as builds audiences and spurs discussion.

 The panel discussion on the Horizons redesign was all about embracing change and how sometimes the strongest forces resisting chance can come from within. Shortened features and extended photos pull people in. Shoot environments that illustrate the impact of research, where the rubber meets the road, not just where the scientist meets the lab. This is a paradigm shift from years past, but a focus on themes allows for more humanistic storytelling. By framing the impact of today’s research in the context of solving problems, we get the stories out of the lab and into the context of society. That allows research stories to touch a broader audience and have more impact.

Part of that impact is through reaching corporate R&D directors and building corporate partnerships. The focus on themes and problem solving helps bridge discovery and implementation. And that bridge, like so many others, is best done through communication channels like research magazines. Long live URMA!