Communication Activities
Executive Summary

Title: Communication Activities

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Introduction/ Background:
SCAR increases the visibility of the organization and its activities through Communication. SCAR develops cooperation with partners; mobilizes resources; effectively links the Secretariat staff with SCAR’s Executive Committee, scientific activities, and other organizations; ensures that all SCAR members are aware of opportunities to participate in SCAR; and establishes SCAR as the preferred source of scientific information for policy makers, scientists and journalists looking for information with respect to scientific issues in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean region.

Important Issues or Factors:
The new SCAR website is now live. This has been a major undertaking and the Secretariat will continue to expand the website over the coming months.

Expected Benefits/Outcomes:
Increased visibility for SCAR, and dissemination of information in a range of matters, in order to create maximum impact.

Partners:
National Antarctic Organisations’ PR groups, other international organisations such as COMNAP, IASC, Science Media Center, etc.

Budget Implications:
A standard publication budget of around $2000; additional requests are made as required.
Communication Activities

Introduction

SCAR aims to improve knowledge of the benefits of Antarctic science that affect the wider community in member countries; promote better understanding by governments, the media, academia, the general public and others of Antarctic and Southern Ocean issues; and improve communication with funding institutions about key Antarctic research initiatives and future directions. The task of communicating SCAR’s message is shared between the SCAR Secretariat acting internationally and SCAR National Committees reaching national communities. SCAR encourages each national member to establish a website and communication protocols and to regularly disseminate news about SCAR activities.

Strategic partnerships with other organizations also raise SCAR’s profile and help to disseminate the SCAR message to an even wider range of audiences (see IP 2). SCAR partners with organizations such as the Science Media Centre in London to disseminate news about Antarctic science when appropriate.

Methods of Communication

SCAR mainly uses electronic means to communicate, publish and distribute news and materials of interest.

The SCAR web site is the major outlet for the organization to communicate with its members, the general public and scientists interested in SCAR’s work. However the old version was out of date and was very much internally focused on SCAR groups. The next generation SCAR website has been designed to appeal to a much wider audience, including the general public, funders, educators, policy makers, and journalists. The new web site is also collaborative work-space, allowing the SCAR groups to manage their own space by using a Content management System (Joomla). A low-bandwidth version of the website is also available for e.g. those connecting in from the Antarctic region.

The SCAR Newsletter (http://www.scar.org/news/newsletters/) is published Quarterly (once a year being published jointly with IASC for a bipolar issue) and highlights SCAR News as well as science and other pertinent articles.

A “News from the SCAR Secretariat” has been introduced that is sent to all SCAR Delegates on a quarterly basis. This focuses on items such as particular science highlights, grant applications, products and other issues that are likely to be of most interest to Delegates.

The Antarctic Climate Change and Environment review (ACCE, 2009), is available online as a free download as are the annual updates. A new major update is also available through Polar Record (see http://www.scar.org/publications/occasional/acce.html).

Additional information about SCAR activities is available at numerous Standing Scientific Group and Scientific Research Program web sites. SCAR communicates it message through a variety of meetings that include business meetings, conferences, symposia, workshop, and other meetings. In addition, individual SCAR groups commonly arrange workshops or seminars that may be held in association with other major events. SCAR Open Science Conferences have been well attended and most importantly draw together an interdisciplinary and geographically diverse community including early career researchers. SCAR also has groups on social networking sites such as ‘Facebook’ (around 1800 members), a resource used extensively by both scientists and the general public, and ‘LinkedIn’ (around 800 members), which is aimed at the business community. SCAR also has a general SCAR Open Science Conference page on Facebook, principally managed by the LOC social media contact, with Secretariat retaining administrative rights. A Google+ SCAR group, and a YouTube channel have also recently been added, and membership is being developed. In-house production of video material has been piloted and is detailed below in the Climate Communications section.

SCAR’s goal is near “real time” transmission of documents that support decision- making, and has adopted a procedure of posting Working and Information Papers in support of the biennial Delegates and Business Meetings in advance.
Climate Communications

In 2011 SCAR began an initiative which aimed to ensure that information related to climate change in the Antarctic Region (and in particular the outputs of the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment Report (Turner et al., 2009)) were communicated to bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in an effective manner. This initial work was funded by the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and ASOC.

SCAR attended the UNFCCC Bonn Climate Change Meeting in June 2013. This highlighted in particular the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment (ACCE) Executive Summary update, which had been published in April 2013 (Turner et al., 2013). This was the most significant SCAR publication in the area of Climate Change since 2009 and was the subject of a press briefing, webcast live by the UNFCCC and archived on their website. A talk on "Antarctica and Global Climate" was also given at a UNFCCC side event on "Rapid Climate Change in Polar and Mountain Regions" by the SCAR Executive Director. In addition SCAR had an exhibit booth for the first week of the Meeting and attended relevant sessions of the UNFCCC Standing Bodies.

Following the events in Bonn, SCAR was asked to host a session on the Antarctic at an event during the November 2013 UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP19) in Warsaw, entitled the “Day of the Cryosphere”, which was organised by the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI). Additionally SCAR promoted its climate science on Saturday November 16th as part of both a press briefing and an official side event at the main COP19 venue highlighting the “On Thin Ice” report by ICCI in cooperation with the World Bank. The “Day of the Cryosphere” event took place on Sunday November 17th and highlighted the importance of the Cryosphere within the recently released IPCC Physical Science Case of Assessment Report 5. SCAR took the opportunity to highlight recent work relating to climate change from two of its cornerstone Scientific Research Programmes (SRPs): Past Antarctic Ice Sheet Dynamics (PAIS), represented by its co-chair Dr. Carlota Escutia, and Antarctic Climate Change in the 21st Century (AntClim21), represented by Dr. Tom Bracegirdle. The Antarctic panel was completed by a presentation from the ice2sea project, represented by Dr. Hartmut Hellmer, on the Antarctic drivers of sea level rise.

SCAR participation at both the Bonn and Warsaw meetings was facilitated by support from the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

In 2014 the ACCE group will launch a “wiki” version of their report, intended to become a living document with regular updates, which will be a key part of the future of SCAR climate change communications (provisional web address is www.acce.scar.org). SCAR has also been invited by ICCI, in collaboration with the IPCC, to participate in a series of meetings to bring climate scientists and policy makers in direct contact in the lead up to the 2015 COP in Paris, though participation will be determined by available funding for this initiative.

References
