Secretariat report on Communications and Publications

One of SCAR’s five primary goals is “to communicate scientific information about the Antarctic region to the public.” (see SCAR Communications Plan: http://www.scar.org/members/xxix/IP05xxixscar.pdf).

SCAR mainly communicates to its members and the general public through the web site, through SCAR publications including a quarterly newsletter and several programme newsletters, and through SCAR Members and the Secretariat attending (and organizing) scientific meetings and intergovernmental meetings (e.g. ATCM, CEP and CCAMLR). Strategic partnerships with other organisations (COMNAP, APECS, SCOR, IASC, WCRP, IACS, IPA etc.) also help to raise SCAR’s profile and help with communicating the SCAR message to different audiences. In particular our partnership with APECS allows us to target audiences such as younger/early career scientists as well as schools and other education establishments. SCAR has also managed to get its message across indirectly through the IPY via projects led by SCAR or involving SCAR scientists, and SCAR membership of the IPY-JC and IPY data subcommittee.

The web site is the main outlet through which we communicate with the general public and scientists interested in SCAR’s work. Press Releases and News Items are posted on a regular basis and we receive a wide range of requests for information through the info@scar.org email address. Hits on the SCAR website continue to increase, with an average of 137 thousand hits per month during the first six months of 2009. SCAR also has groups on social networking sites such as ‘Facebook’, a resource used especially intensively by younger scientists and the general public, ‘LinkedIn’, aimed at the business community and ‘SciSpace’ aimed at the science community. The web site is constantly being improved and added to, some of the latest changes being the move of formerly hidden items from the Members page to the open pages and the addition of Educational links on the Capacity building pages. There is now a plan to add all finalized finance and meeting documents once they have been approved to the public space.

Despite the impressive statistics, SCAR’s web presence could be significantly further improved. Not least we need to make more of opportunities for the web site to become interactive. Achieving this goal appears to be difficult while the site is hosted by SPRI, which means we are subject to the constraints of Cambridge University. If we had our own web site hosted on an independent server (as is now done for the Martha Muse Award web site – www.museprize.org), we would be free of such constraints, which would provide us with a wider range of opportunities for development. One thing for EXCOM to discuss therefore is restructuring and redesigning the SCAR website to facilitate a new, more modern approach. The new website must appeal to a wider audience and target the general public, educators, policy makers, journalists, as well as allowing blogs, RSS feeds etc. As has been discussed previously with EXCOM and Delegates, among other things we need the site to be outward looking as well as inward looking; by that we mean having a front page that addresses the key issues of the day (e.g. global warming, biodiversity, ocean acidification, glaciers and sea-level rise), and is separate from all the pages that
we currently have and will still require dealing with SCAR’s science and advisory business. There is much that could be done, and there are some excellent examples to follow.

We had considered producing as an addition to the web site a set of popular publications on aspects of the Antarctic. This notion has since been overtaken by events (there is now a plethora of such documents available from other sources). But we do need our own brief articles on the key issues of the day, and could use those to link to other more detailed general publications.

We also have the recommendation from the latest Cross-Linkages Workshop that the web site should contain a comprehensive set of downloadable data fields that could form the basis for scientific articles, lectures, papers and so on.

With regard to SCAR publications, we continue to publish in electronic format whenever possible, with core reports and bulletins being made available on [http://www.scar.org/publications/](http://www.scar.org/publications/) and additional SCAR material also available through the SSG and SRP websites. In addition SCAR has also contributed to the publication of the English version of the French film “Enterres Volontaires”, which describes the adventures of three Frenchmen (J Dubois, a meteorologist, R Schlich, a geophysicist, and C Lorius a glaciologist) who occupied the Charcot Station, a hut buried under the ice near the South magnetic pole and located 320 km from the coast, from January 1957 to January 1958.

The SCAR 50th Anniversary book is being produced to highlight SCAR’s contributions over the past 50 years. Both the Antarctic Climate Change and Environment review (ACCE) and the Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS) plan will also be published in 2009 and will be significant contributions to the IPY. SCAR also reports to ATCM and CEP, and our reports are available to the public on our web site and through the ATS web site. The ACCE document will be published in 500 copies as a limited edition book, with its chapters also available in downloadable format for university lecturers, students and the public on the SCAR web site.

Bearing in mind the cost of travel (plus the associated carbon cost) and to increase the frequency of contact between EXCOM, SCAR scientists and the Secretariat, SCAR should make more use of telephone and on-line conferencing via free software such as Skype and ooVoo. This could start with EXCOM intersessional meetings.

At this point in time we seek a recommendation from EXCOM for the Secretariat to develop a costed plan for upgrading the web site to achieve the stated goals, which would include making it independent of the University. We also seek the ideas of EXCOM members as to content and arrangement of the web site, and endorsement for us to approach the wider SCAR community for further such advice.