SCAR Communication Activities
Executive Summary

Title:  SCAR 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. Several issues have arisen because of the company contracted to create it; these will need to be addressed soon. Several groups have requested SCAR to get an online meeting system that can be used to facilitate communication.

Expected Benefits/Outcomes:
Increased visibility for SCAR, and dissemination of information in a range of matters, in order to create maximum impact. A well-functioning and structured website makes it much more likely that SCAR will be the main ‘go-to’ for Antarctic information. An online meeting tool will greatly improve group communication between in-person meetings.

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

Budget Implications:
A standard publication budget of $2000 (2015); SCAR observer at UNFCCC has a $2000 allocation (2015); online meeting tool (~$1000/year); security fixes for website (~$250); additional requests are made as required.
SCAR Communication Activities

Introduction
The task of communicating SCAR’s message is shared between the SCAR Secretariat acting internationally and SCAR National Committees reaching national communities. 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 WP 22 for an update on partnerships).

SCAR mainly uses electronic means to communicate, publish and distribute news and materials of interest. As technology is continually advancing, SCAR needs to stay current with these changes and be able to react quickly to these new systems.

Website Issues
Website Security
The SCAR website is the major outlet for communicating with members, the general public and scientists interested in SCAR’s work. The new website, which went live in July 2014, was developed using the Joomla Content Management System to allow SCAR groups to manage their own spaces and some are now doing so successfully. Others need a little help in this area.

The security of the website is of real concern. The old website was hosted by Cambridge University (through the Scott Polar Research Institute) which provided a very secure environment, and the original plan was to do the same with the new. The company appointed to develop the new website, Redwire, were also to provide ongoing support for at least the first year, and for this they would need full access to the whole system which the university could not allow for security reasons. Redwire were keen to host the website themselves but would then have complete control over all aspects of the site. To enable unrestricted access by both Redwire and our webmaster, it was agreed to host the website with a highly-respected third party company. In January 2015, the website was severely hacked and it transpired that Redwire had failed to install vital security updates, despite SCAR having renewed our support contract with them in October. The hack was fixed as far as possible by our webmaster (who is not a Joomla expert but is very experienced in systems management) and the web hosting company. The website remained vulnerable to hacking and Redwire were unable to offer a solution.

In August 2015, a Joomla expert (MyJoomla.com) was commissioned to fix the remaining issues from the hack and to install essential security updates. The website is now secure but will require ongoing monitoring and maintenance by someone who understands Joomla and website security. There will be a cost implication and one option is to subscribe to a maintenance package with MyJoomla.com at a cost of £5 per month (approximately $90 per year). Additional time is also required to continually update the site with new more secure versions of Joomla and other packages used. Costs so far have been absorbed into general office expenses but this has put stress on other areas. A dedicated allocation of funds for website security and maintenance is desirable.

Structure of the Website
The current menus for the SCAR website are an acronym soup and unless you are extremely familiar with all the internal workings of SCAR it is almost impossible to find what one is looking for. A review of the website structure needs to be conducted soon and the menus and content reorganized accordingly. This should be done by contracting a specialist in these matters ($500) and be completed by the next Delegates meeting. Alternatively, a team of volunteers from the various audiences that SCAR hopes to reach could be assembled and asked to take on the task. This option would not cost additional funds, but would require much more time. A combination of both approaches is suggested to quickly, effectively and efficiently bring the SCAR website up to the standard expected from an organization of this calibre.
SCAR Newsletter

The SCAR Newsletter ([http://www.scar.org/news/newsletters/](http://www.scar.org/news/newsletters/)) was once issued quarterly but is now published on a less regular basis due to general pressure of work in the Secretariat. The current format of the Newsletter, which is developed in InDesign and published as a PDF, is time-consuming to put together. There is a proposal to follow the practice of other organizations (for example, APECS and CliC) to create an online Newsletter using automatic feeds for most of the content. This would greatly reduce the time commitment and increase the regularity of publication. If a downloadable and printable PDF is still desired, there are additional components that can be set up through the website to create a newsletter in less time than manually, but training for the staff on that component will need to be undertaken. The end goal is to produce a newsletter that captures the breadth of work that SCAR performs, updates the community on new science results, and is something people want to read.

Other Communications

SCAR communicates its 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 2800 members), a resource used extensively by both scientists and the general public, and ‘LinkedIn’ (around 900 members), which is aimed at the business/professional 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 – however content is sparse. Social media remains an important tool in communicating our activities, although it is time consuming and thus ways to increase efficiency and impact should be explored.

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. However, over the years this has caused the production of many papers, perhaps too many for any one participant to read and thoroughly digest. A review of this paper generation procedure should be done internally with ExCom and the Secretariat to reduce workload in both document production and digestion, and more effectively assure information needed for decisions is disseminated.

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) 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 of Foreign Affairs, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and ASOC.

As previously reported SCAR attended the UNFCCC Bonn Climate Change Meeting in June 2013 highlighting in particular the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment (ACCE) Executive Summary update, which had been published in April 2013. SCAR also hosted 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).

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 launched 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.
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.

SCAR is currently investigating opportunities to partner with ICCI to provide a platform for the relevant groups to present their research at the Paris COP in December 2015.

If this type of activity is something that SCAR would like to continue doing, a more concrete plan with a timeline of events, activities, etc should be developed. This plan could then be the basis for potential grants to various funding organizations.