

Report on the organization of the XXXI SCAR meeting

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 30 July-11 August, 2010

1. Planning and Preparations for SCAR XXXI/COMNAP XXII

Following the examples of the XXIX (Australia) and XXX (Russia) meetings, and trying to minimize the travel costs due to the long travel distances from most SCAR nations to Argentina it was proposed that the SCAR science week and the SCAR Delegates meeting would be run back to back. The SCAR Executive Committee subsequently adopted this plan for the Buenos Aires meeting.

To ensure that the Buenos Aires meeting was planned efficiently and effectively for both SCAR and COMNAP the Dirección Nacional del Antártico (DNA) delegated many of the organizational aspects of the event to the Fundación Proantártida (a "Charity").

Once the Argentine Foreign Affairs Ministry approved the Argentine contribution for the event (AR\$ 2.000.000, some US\$ 500.000), a Local Organizing Committee (LOC) was established. Membership of this group evolved as preparations for the meeting developed and the final membership is given in Appendix A of this report. In March 2010, María Graziani and Associates, a local organizing company, was appointed as the professional conference organizer (PCO) for SCAR/COMNAP 2010.

Requirements for SCAR conferences are documented in "Guidelines for Organizers of Biennial SCAR Meetings" (2005 revised version), which provided the local organizers with detailed requirements for organizational structure, meeting room requirements and technical requirements. The LOC also worked closely with the SCAR Secretariat (Colin Summerhayes first and lately Mike Sparrow and Renuka Badhe in Cambridge, UK as well as SCAR President Chuck Kennicutt in the US) and the COMNAP Secretariat (Michelle Rogan-Finnemore in Christchurch).

During year 2009 a search for a suitable venue was conducted. It was decided that the best place with an affordable price was the Panamericano Hotel located in downtown Buenos Aires. The agreement with the hotel was reached by August 2009 while the contract was signed in December 2009. All meeting rooms (12) were booked for approximately 10 days and some of them were extended until the end of the meeting. In total the combined meeting lasted 15 days. The hotel was asked to offer preferential low fares for rooms to the meeting attendants and they were requested to provide the coffee-breaks. At the end the hotel provided meeting rooms, coffee-breaks, 2 ice-breakers and 1 dinner (OSC banquet) at a cost of some US\$ 345.000.

Electronic communication (web site and email) was primarily used to publicize the meeting, and the SCAR Open Science Conference in particular. Regular email notification was sent to all participants in the 2008 Russia meeting, to SCAR National Committees, to the participants of the last Latin American Antarctic Symposium (Ecuador, 2009) and to everyone who registered interest on the website or submitted an abstract.

The SCAR/COMNAP 2010 web site was opened on 1 December 2009 and continued to develop and include additional information during the build-up to the meetings. The conference web site was linked from both the SCAR and the COMNAP home pages, and from a number of national and international organizations.

Conference circulars were delivered to all who registered interest (filled and sent back a pre-registration form). A CD, containing abstracts from the Open Science Conference was distributed at registration (a limited number of copies may be still obtainable from the Instituto Antártico Argentino).

The pre-registration form was made available from the conference webpage by mid-January 2010 and the registration and payment form was activated by May 2010 due to delays in the credit card payment system. Payment was possible by credit cards (VISA and MASTERCARD), bank transfer in US\$ or Euros or cash (on site).

Organisation followed a new model, with the SCAR Delegates (9-11 August) and COMNAP (9-13 August) meetings being held in parallel sessions during the second week with the science week located during the preceding 9 days. SCAR business groups met early during the first weekend (Fri to Mon) and the SCAR OSC lasted 4 days (Tue to Fri).

2. SCAR Business Meetings (30 July to 2 August)

The core elements of the first part of SCAR's Science Week were the business meetings of SCAR's Standing Scientific Groups (SSGs) on Physical Sciences, the Life Sciences, and Geosciences. Around these were clustered meetings or workshops of various SCAR Action Groups, Expert Groups, Scientific Research Programmes, and SCAR-led projects for the International Polar Year (IPY).

Some SCAR subsidiary groups did not use the requested rooms. In future the group chairs must think very carefully and well in advance the real needs of rooms for the group since this impacts directly in the meeting budget and also in the schedule. The extreme example was the History Group that requested a room for two full days and met for only half a day.

Additional science and management meetings were held in Buenos Aires during the same general period to capitalise on the fact that many SCAR scientists would be coming to Buenos Aires in July.

3. The SCAR Open Science Conference (3 to 6 August)

The SCAR Executive Committee and Chief Officers decided that the theme for the Open Science Conference should be "Antarctica: witness to the past and guide to the future".

Following the Executive Committee plan the four-day science conference was structured with the opening ceremony in the evening of the previous day (Monday

August 2nd) to allow more time for the OSC itself. The opening ceremony was headed by the Argentine Minister of Science and Technology.

All OSC scientific abstracts were submitted electronically using a non-commercially abstract service linked from the conference web site. Abstract submission was opened in mid January 2010, and was originally planned to close on March 2010.

After consultation with the SCAR Executive and secretariat, this deadline was extended to April 30, 2010. A total of 866 abstracts were submitted for the OSC. A small number of abstracts were accepted after the final deadline where the authors had exceptional circumstances.

An International Science Organising Committee (SOC) led by John Priscu (US) and Carlota Escutia Dotti (Spain) was appointed during year 2009 to vet the abstracts electronically, and to organise them into themes and oral or poster sessions. The SOC in consultation with SCAR senior researchers proposed and named 46 thematic sessions.

The SOC reviewed and graded all abstract submissions electronically. Of the 866 accepted abstracts, 46 were subsequently formally withdrawn, either because an author could not attend the meeting or because the work to be reported was not completed in time.

The Executive Committee and Chief Officers of the SSGs in consultation with the leaders of SCAR's Scientific Research Programmes selected the topics and speakers for the keynote talks. The session chairs and the SOC selected the speakers for topic lectures within each session.

After the SOC approval the LOC was able to notify authors by e-mail by the end of May 2010 of the status of their abstract submission and the theme to which it was assigned. The themes and the allocation of all accepted abstracts were then made available on the conference web site. All abstracts were distributed to OSC delegates on the SCAR/COMNAP 2010 conference CD when they registered.

To help plan and implement the conference, the SOC invited nominated experts to take on the role of "Theme Chairs" or "Session Chairs". The Theme Chairs played an important role in structuring the Conference and ensuring its success. Their responsibilities included:

- ordering the oral and poster presentations within a theme to make a logical presentation structure;
- chairing one of the oral sessions in the theme and, where the theme extended over several sessions, selecting and appointing additional chair persons;
- liaising with leaders of related scientific themes to minimize conflict between parallel sessions.

Developing a timetable to minimize conflicts between the 44 parallel themes was a significant challenge not only to the organizers but also to the SCAR objective to stimulate interdisciplinary discussion.

Around 55 % of submitted papers were assigned to poster presentations. Poster spaces were assigned in a way that maintained the thematic order. All posters were displayed for full 3-days of the OSC (and before where requested).

As well as formal withdrawals there were about 5 % “no-shows” in the timetable. The “no-shows” left gaps in the actual timetable/presentation space but it was minimized with last minute amendments and updates of the programme (mainly the web version but also in hard copies).

The final number of presentations was: 77 keynotes, 262 orals and 481 posters (total 820).

4. XXXI SCAR Delegates meeting

The meeting was held at the Panamericano hotel from August 9 to 11.

The welcome reception (icebreaker) was offered at the same venue and was joint with the COMNAP participants on the evening of Sunday August 8.

The SCAR banquet was also offered together with the COMNAP members on the evening of Tuesday August 10 at a private restaurant. Transportation to and from the venue was also provided for free to all participants.

Although all meeting documents were uploaded in the SCAR webpage in due time the LOC was requested to print copies of some of them, specially the SCAR strategic plan 2012-2016.

The SCAR Executive Committee also met with the Executive Committee of COMNAP, on August 8th.

5. Practical Aspects

Audio-visual and other technical facilities at most venues were provided under contract from a local supplier. All OSC oral presentations were submitted electronically in PC-compatible format to an in-house technician in advance of the session in which they were to be presented.

An “Internet Café” (with 15 terminals and 2 printers) was available for participants. Access to the high-speed LAN was also available to delegates through wireless connection. Due to economic reasons the LOC was only able to provide daily pins for free wireless internet use to all SCAR group leaders and delegates.

6. Meeting attendance

Registration for SCAR/COMNAP was handled electronically by the PCO. The online registration form, linked from the conference web site, allowed delegates to register for the many different meeting options, as well as to book accommodation and other services.

There were 662 registered attendees at the SCAR Open Science Conference (397 full registrations, 190 scholarships, 108 student registrations and 17 accompanying persons). 20% were from the host country (compared to 35% in Bremen in 2004 and 33% in

Hobart in 2006). The OSC was the only event for which delegate registration fees were payable and these were set at:

- **OSC Participant. - OSC Full participant registration fee:** \$325 (early (*)), \$ 400 (regular (*)), \$ 450 (late (*)) or **Student** \$ 125 (early (*)), \$ 175 (regular (*)), \$ 200 (late (**))
- **OSC Accompanying Person.** \$ 100
- **OSC Dinner :** \$ 80

* Payment dates:

- Early: Before July 1st
- Regular: Before August 1st
- Late: Starting August 1st and on site.

The total number of delegates who registered for all components of SCAR/COMNAP 2010 (corrected for cancellations) was 1030, from 37 different nations. From them almost 1000 attended OSC and SCAR meetings and 156 attended only COMNAP meetings. Some of them attended both SCAR+OSC and COMNAP meetings.

Costs of holding SCAR/COMNAP meetings are the responsibility of the host and neither SCAR nor COMNAP contribute to the funding. While a registration fee was charged for the OSC (see above), fees were not charged to the participants in the SCAR or COMNAP Delegates meetings.

Argentina provided 198 grants covering the registration cost for the OSC conference. 178 of them covered the full amount of the registration and only 20 covered just part of it.

7. Social Functions

The following SCAR social functions were organised during the meetings:

- The Opening Icebreaker - Monday August 2nd evening at the Panamericano Hotel
- The SCAR Open Science Conference Dinner – Thursday August 5th evening at the Panamericano Hotel.
- SCAR and COMNAP Delegates Welcome Reception (invitation only) - Sunday July 8th at the Panamericano Hotel.
- SCAR and COMNAP Delegates Banquet (invitation only) - Tuesday August 10th at Rodizio restaurant, at the river front.

8. Summary and Recommendations

The total of 1030 registered attendees at SCAR/COMNAP 2010 was more or less at the level that the local and scientific organizing committees expected (particularly because

the Oslo IPY meeting was held not long before). Facilities were adequate to support this number of delegates, and the organisers were gratified that interest in Antarctica science and logistics was able to attract so many people to Buenos Aires.

Most of the feedback and comments received have been very positive. Delegates found the meeting productive and generally well managed and supported, and they had an enjoyable experience. They considered the meeting to be a success. One valued point was to have all meetings in the same venue.

The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) contributed significantly to that success. The conference was well organized and run, staff were always available at various venues to help if any problems arose.

The main criticisms that were received about the organization of the Open Science Conference mostly concerned issues that were a result of the late abstract deadline, abstract processing and information about acceptance. Other conflicting issues were related to the use of credit cards as payment method that was open late during the registration process and the process for booking accommodations different from the Panamericano hotel.

Other general concerns included:

- there were too many parallel sessions and hence inevitable timetable conflicts,
- one of the two poster display rooms was too crowded.

There were no criticisms of the cost of registration for the 4-day OSC since we managed to keep the fees 10% lower than previous meetings.

The most conflicting issues arose from some inefficiencies managing the abstracts, session assignments and therefore setting up the program. These were managed between the SCAR Secretariat, the LOC and the chairs of the SOC and produced a long delay in having the complete program with the final room assignments. In turn it caused a delay in sending it into press and delivering the information to each participant.

While the invited lectures or plenary talks were decided (and managed) by SCAR the topical presentation for each session was managed by the SOC and the session chairs. In some cases there were troubles due to a lack of coordination between the SOC and the session chairs.

There are some things that we cannot change – e.g. it is always likely that the bulk of the abstracts for the OSC will arrive within the last week before the last deadline.

9. In future:

- (i) The themes should be decided in advance by the SSGs;
- (ii) There should be fewer parallel sessions;
- (iii) More thought needs to be given to the way in which the poster sessions are organized in space and time, so as to get the best out of them;
- (iv) It may be better to have a printed abstract volume than a CD (even better to have both), because a printed volume is easier to scan when deciding which talk to

- attend next but the experience is that the printed volume is too heavy (also expensive and costs a lot of trees) and usually left before leaving back;
- (v) SCAR should set standards for abstracts (format and length) as well as provide an ISBN number for the abstract publication;
 - (vi) More time has to be given to the abstract-managing process and session organization. Communication with the proposed session chairs should be more frequent;
 - (vii) Session chairs should be contacted and confirmed their wish to contribute well in advance;
 - (viii) The ISOC must comply with the deadlines for providing the abstract allocation to each session;
 - (ix) If co-chaired the ISOC chairs would ideally include one person from the LOC;
 - (x) Group chairs and leaders must think carefully and well in advance their needs for meeting rooms. SCAR Secretary must check the requests with the real needs.

10. Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to make SCAR/COMNAP 2010 a success, including:

- many groups from within the Instituto Antártico Argentino
- the Local Organizing Committee and those who supported its work.
- the International Science Organizing Committee.
- the SCAR and COMNAP secretariats.
- the OSC theme leaders and session chairs.
- the Conference Organizers (María Graziani and Associates)
- not least the delegates to all events associated with SCAR/COMNAP 2010, who contributed their expertise, their enthusiasm, and the information that made the meeting such a valuable exchange on the very latest status of Antarctic science and logistics.

Appendix A: Membership of Organizing Committees

Local Organizing Committee for the SCAR & COMNAP Meetings

Mariano Memolli (COMNAP)
Sergio Marensi (SCAR+OSC)
Carlos Rizzutti
Gustavo Rodriguez
Conrado Laigle
Diego Gómez Izquierdo
Sergio Santillana
Veronica Vlasich
Viviana Alder
Fernanda Reboull

International Scientific Organising Committee (ISOC)

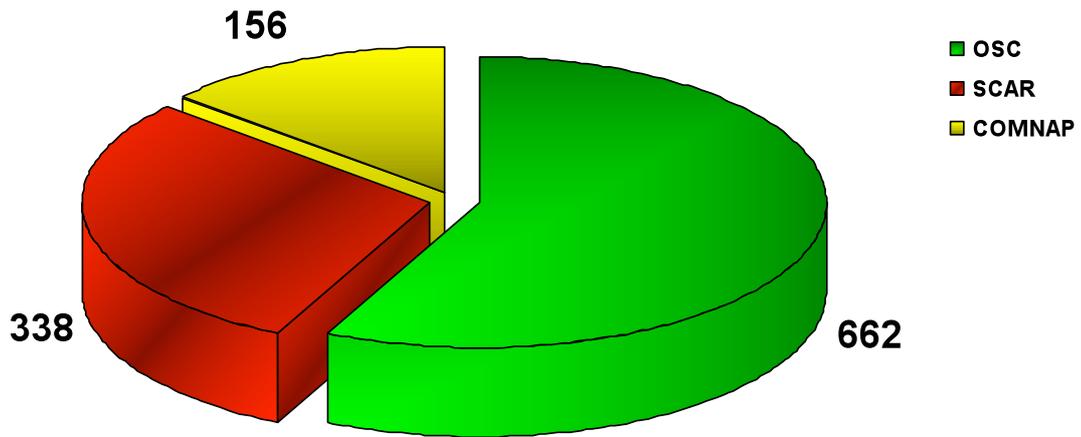
| | | |
|----|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | A Capra (Ita) | |
| 2 | T Wilson (US) | |
| 3 | C Escutia (Spa) | Co-CHAIR |
| 4 | K Conlan (Can) | |
| 5 | J Gutt (Ger) | |
| 6 | E Hofman (US) | |
| 7 | P Convey (UK) | |
| 8 | M Candidi (It) | |
| 9 | S Marensi (Arg) | |
| 10 | E Wolff (UK) | |
| 11 | J Storey (Au) | |
| 12 | A N-Garbato (UK) | |
| 13 | K Kauristie (Fi) | |
| 14 | H Campbell (UK) | |
| 15 | S Chown (SA) | |
| 16 | C Summerhayes | |
| 17 | R Ravendra | |
| 18 | M Fikuchi (JPN) | |
| 19 | E Thomas (UK) | |
| 20 | H Yang (CHI) | |
| 21 | E Andreeva (RUS) | |
| 22 | J Simoes (BRA) | |
| 23 | L. Campos (BR) | |
| 24 | S Kang | |
| 25 | J Turner (UK) | |
| 26 | J Priscu (USA) | Co-CHAIR |
| 27 | F Fernandoy | |
| 28 | V Alder (ARG) | |

Appendix B: Open Science Conference pre-registration figures

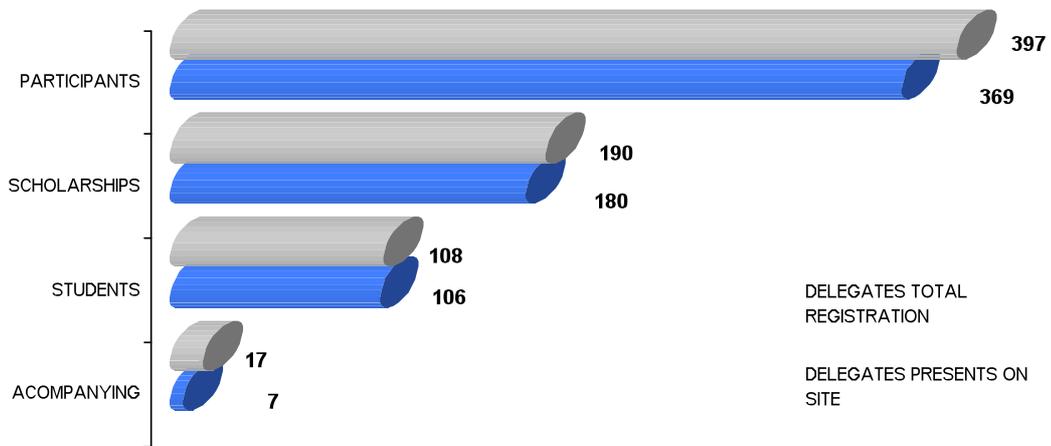
| COUNTRY | ABSTRACTS | PRE-REGISTRATIONS |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Argentina | 103 | 117 |
| Australia | 40 | 43 |
| Belgium | 7 | 6 |
| Brazil | 119 | 129 |
| Canada | 17 | 18 |
| Chile | 70 | 73 |
| China | 14 | 17 |
| Czech Republic | 1 | 1 |
| Denmark | 2 | 2 |
| Ecuador | 3 | 5 |
| Egypt | 1 | 1 |
| Estonia | 1 | 2 |
| Ethiopia | 1 | 2 |
| Finland | 4 | 5 |
| France | 21 | 26 |
| Germany | 28 | 34 |
| Iceland | 0 | 1 |
| India | 13 | 16 |
| Iran | 0 | 1 |
| Ireland | 1 | 1 |
| Italy | 24 | 25 |
| Japan | 30 | 30 |
| Malaysia | 11 | 12 |
| Monaco | 0 | 1 |
| New Zealand | 22 | 21 |
| Nigeria | 0 | 6 |
| Norway | 4 | 4 |
| Peru | 6 | 7 |
| Poland | 3 | 4 |
| Portugal | 7 | 8 |
| Republic of Korea | 7 | 7 |
| Romania | 5 | 3 |
| Russia | 20 | 23 |
| Saudi Arabia | 1 | 1 |
| Slovenia | 1 | 1 |
| Somalia | 0 | 1 |
| South Africa | 16 | 16 |
| Spain | 18 | 26 |
| Sweden | 3 | 3 |
| Switzerland | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| The Netherlands | 7 | 5 |
| Turkey | 1 | 1 |
| UK | 43 | 40 |
| Ukraine | 13 | 15 |
| Uruguay | 9 | 11 |
| USA | 153 | 147 |
| Venezuela | 0 | 1 |
| Not Stated | 15 | 0 |
| Total | 866 | 920 |

Appendix C: Registration by conference and category



OPEN SCIENCE CONFERENCE CATEGORIES DISTRIBUTION



Appendix D: on site attendees by country

