SCAR Executive Committee Meeting 2017

Brno, Czech Republic, 31 July - 2 August 2017

SCAR Communication Activities

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Summary (<150 words):

Much work has been done to improve SCAR communications over the past year and progress continues to be made. The new online newsletter was launched and positive feedback has been received. The new SCAR website is also progressing with a hoped launch for end of September. Many groups have been using the online meeting tool and appreciate this new service. Regular maintenance of mailing lists and contact lists is also ongoing.

Recommendations that EXCOM should consider (if any): *Please indicate if approval is necessary or if they are just asked to note information.*

The ExCom is asked to note the major progress in this area and to consider allocating additional resources to help move the backlog of information from the archived website to the new website.

General Update

The SCAR Secretariat regularly publishes material to the website, Facebook, Twitter and Linked In. This includes updates on SCAR activities, research highlights, selected partner news, educational resources and other items of interest to the Antarctic Community. We also maintain email lists for various purposes and groups. The Go-To-Meeting online communication platform is used often and the service is much appreciated by groups.

A major achievement for this includes the creation and continual publication of the new online newsletter that has been published monthly since November. Many comments from the community have come back praising this effort and the inclusion of featured member countries and the "Get to Know SCAR" have been welcomed.

A simple document outlining all the SCAR groups and their function has been created as part of the membership guide and will form the basis for many communications products in the coming year. A similar effort for SCAR products is also underway and should be finished by early October.

An outstanding request for the Secretariat has been to develop a standard SCAR PowerPoint presentation for community use. With the advance of the simplified group and product descriptions and the interest of a talented short-term intern in the office, it is hoped that this will be completed in October as well.

New Websites

The current SCAR website has many issues ranging from security risks, poor structural development, and a difficult user experience. The 2016 Delegates meeting approved the creation of a new website. The new site is progressing well with the main technical aspects completed. The main effort now is the restructuring of content and writing of new information for various pages, etc. Things have progressed to the point that hopefully group leaders will be able to review their pages, as well as provide overall comments, in August with an anticipated launch of the new site for late September.

One new feature of the site will be the SCAR Library where all SCAR documents are centrally located. The library is searchable and allows for more efficient integration of various content throughout the site. If desired, the scanned documents from the SCAR archives could be added to this system.

There are still many pieces of content from the website that existed before the current one that need to be added to the new website. This will take some time and additional resources as the Secretariat does not have the capacity to address this backlog at the current time.

The draft site can be accessed here:
http://77.104.171.210/~scar3115/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=990&Itemid=1231

A new Tinker-Muse Prize website is also being designed. It is based on the same system and template that the new SCAR site is built on, but will have a slightly different look to make it distinct from SCAR. Using the same system and template will make it much more straightforward for the Secretariat to maintain, as the current Muse site uses a different system and template, complicating issues unnecessarily. It is hoped that this site will also be launched in October after consultation with the Tinker Foundation.

SCAR Communications Strategy

The 2011-2016 SCAR Strategic Plan states that an update to the SCAR Communications Strategy should be conducted. The most recent Communications Plan that can be found by

the Secretariat is from 2006 (http://tinyurl.com/2006-SCAR-Communication-Plan). This plan is now 10 years old and quite out-of-date. For example, Facebook (launched in 2004), YouTube (launched in 2005), and Twitter (launched in 2006) have little mention in this plan, and many of the communication tools of today either did not exist (e.g. Google Docs and Dropbox) or were not included (e.g. RSS feeds, etc.). This task of updating the Communication Strategy in connection with the last Strategic plan was not completed and is highlighted as a need in the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan as well. Given the large number of tasks set forth in the new Strategic Plan dealing with communication, Delegates agreed in 2016 that a new Communications Strategy needs to be developed.

The creation of an ad hoc committee to address this was also approved. This committee should be composed of a mix between active scientists from various disciplines, communications professionals and stakeholders with wide geographic representation. The group can communicate online, but a SCAR communications workshop is advised to concentrate the generation of ideas, writing of the strategy and timely delivery of both.

$18,000 USD from the 2016 Contingency Funds has been allocated to support the creation of the strategy as well as to help with implementation. It is hoped that such a group will be formed in November 2017 and start to progressing the activity.

Office IT System / SCAR Scientist Directory

There is a need for an office IT system to integrate various contact lists and address books to make things run more efficiently. Preliminary research on options has been done and it is possible to design a system that would allow for shared address books within the Secretariat and would integrate into the website. Options currently being investigated are based on tools that already exist and can integrate into Google Apps for Non-Profits, Joomla! and the Apple ecosystem, which are the main tools of the Secretariat. Having a system built on these platforms is viewed as a more sustainable option long-term than building a separate stand-alone system that would likely become out of date quickly as technology advances.

This new system would allow for a much easier way to maintain lists of scientists involved in various groups, help to keep a more accurate record of volunteers involved with SCAR and their roles over time, and make it easier for staff to respond to requests for information. It would also be a simplification of routine administration as e.g. email address changes would automatically be updated throughout all platforms and systems.

$6000 USD has been allocated for the design and implementation of the system. When the new website is completed and launched, consultations with IT experts will begin to find a person/company to design and implement the system.