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SCAR Conferences and Symposia: archiving, branding, etc.

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Summary (<150 words):

SCAR does not currently have a policy on dealing with archiving of conference and symposia materials, consistent branding for SCAR meetings, or uniform standards for dealing with abstracts. SCAR does have "Guidelines for Organisers of SCAR Meetings", but it mainly deals with logistics and local organizing for the Open Science Conference and Business/Delegates meetings. It has been suggested that an update to the guide be produced that details expectations about archiving, branding and potential cost saving measures. It has also been requested that the guide be expanded to include symposia.

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 consider a standardized branding scheme as well as a plan for archiving conference/symposia materials.

Background:

SCAR has been holding symposia and Open Science Conferences (OSCs) for many years. The science programmes from these meetings, as well as the schedule of social and side events play an important role in the archiving of Antarctic research developments over the decades and are an important reference long after the end of the meeting.

Currently Open Science Conference hosts are asked to provide a written report of the meeting to SCAR as a history of what happened. The content of these reports varies widely and often does not include the level of detail that a conference website holds. The abstract books from 2012, 2014 and 2016 have been allocated SCAR ISBN numbers and DOIs, and uploaded to the SCAR website, however conference sessions and themes are not usually part of these abstract books. There are no other requirements or guidelines for preserving activities from the conference.

The Secretariat often receives requests from scientists asking for a previous conference/symposia session list or description, or other pieces of information. Often, we have to reply that unfortunately we do not have that information and that can reflect poorly.

Another emerging concern is the archiving of conference websites and domains. Thankfully both New Zealand and Malaysia have archived the websites, but they are now using different domain names and are often difficult for people to find. In addition, in the case of the 2014 and 2016 OSCs, the domain names that scientists are used to using for those events are now being directed to content that both irrelevant and embarrassing to SCAR.

The sites from previous conferences have been lost and along with that, much of the information on the activities at the meeting.

Information on Symposia is not currently collected by the Secretariat in any systematic way and archiving is dependent upon the local organizers.

Potential Next Steps:

Technology has changed a great deal since the first symposia and OSC, there are many simple things SCAR can do to help unify its meetings, support potential bids for hosting and help to preserve conference materials. A few examples could be to:
- Buy the domain names for future SCAR meetings to ensure forwarding to archived sites and consistent website address branding.
- Develop a simple SCAR conference website template (using the same CMS and template as the SCAR website) and host the sites on subdomains within SCAR (i.e. 2022.scar.org). This would help to create a 'SCAR meeting brand' that becomes recognizable, and would ensure that the websites are properly archived because they are within SCAR's control.

The structure and content of the webpages would still be within the control of the local hosts.

- Consider partnering with other organizers to pool resources and share a subscription to an abstract submission system creating uniformity and standardized expectations, particularly for reviewers (this was suggested already at the SCAR/IASC Think Tank in 2015). This would likely also reduce meeting costs, potentially helping to encourage countries with less resources for these activities to host the events. This system could also be used for many of the SCAR groups who also need to research and acquire these systems for one-off meetings, greatly reducing the volunteers' workload.
- Completely revise the "Guidelines for Organisers of SCAR Meetings" to include symposia, technological developments, expectations for consistent branding and additional requirements for archiving. This should be done in consultation with recent OSC and Symposia hosts.

* Please note, these suggestions are not proposing that SCAR takes over the management/administration of the meetings, just that SCAR may be able to provide tools to help facilitate more uniformity and consistency over time.