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SCAR Communications Activities and Website 2022-23 Report

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Summary

SCAR's communications activities encompass a spectrum of initiatives aimed at engaging with diverse stakeholders, both within the SCAR community and beyond. The Secretariat oversees SCAR-wide communications and engages in a variety of activities, including managing the SCAR website, writing a monthly newsletter, issuing mailouts, and managing SCAR's social media presence. The SCAR newsletter consistently outperforms industry standards, and SCAR's social media presence is growing. Note that many SCAR groups carry out their own outreach and communications activities (e.g. social media) which are reported separately, in the relevant group reports.

In December 2022, the Secretariat worked with an animator to create an engaging 2-minute animated video for SCAR, presenting key messages from the Antarctic Environments and Climate Change Report.

Furthermore, the SCAR Project Officer (PO) is working on migrating and redesigning the SCAR website to WordPress for an improved user experience, navigation, and content management. The website redesign aims to engage the community more effectively and simplify information access. The transition also includes transferring the extensive SCAR library and redesign of the layout, especially for SCAR group and programme pages. The anticipated launch date for the new website is mid-October.

SCAR Communications Activities

Ongoing communications activities

The SCAR Secretariat is actively engaged in a wide range of activities, targeting both the internal SCAR community and a broader audience on a daily basis. The primary goal is to showcase SCAR's work, as well as raising awareness of the global importance of the Antarctic region (including the Southern Ocean), and its role in the Earth system more generally. To achieve this, the Secretariat is using a mix of well-established platforms as well as new and innovative formats. A dedicated Project Officer, formerly the Communications and Information Officer, oversees SCAR's communication efforts with support from the Secretariat team and contractors.

The Secretariat uses a diverse a range of communications methods, including online channels, physical material and in-person methods of communication. These encompass the SCAR website, a monthly newsletter, mailouts, social media, in-person promotion at events and various promotional resources such as an [annual report infographic](#) to the ATCM and end-of year-reviews.

The monthly newsletter serves as a reliable source of information for the SCAR community and we often receive requests and suggested content from the community. The newsletter consistently achieves open and click-rate that surpass industry standards (see Appendix 1).

SCAR has active and growing presence on social media, including X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, a Facebook Group, and a Facebook Page. The SCAR page on X is set to reach 10,000 followers in the coming days. Short, engaging videos and visual content are particularly well-received on X, leading to frequent interactions with the community and partner organisations. Given decline in Facebook activity over the past years, and concerns about the future of X, the Secretariat is continually reassessing SCAR's presence on existing and emerging platforms for news dissemination.

During this summer, the Secretariat once again hosted a science communications intern for a four-week placement, overseen by the Project Officer. This internship has yielded a set of infographics to complement the Information Summaries on the Antarctic Environments Portal, policy research contributions, and content editing for the new SCAR website. The ED and Secretariat team also engage in outreach activities where appropriate - recent highlights include a TedX talk by the ED, and a presentation by the PO to the ISC mid-term meeting in Paris.

'Our future depends on us' ACCE Report Animation

Building on the success of the Antarctic Environments and Climate Change Report, the PO worked with an animator to present the report's key messages in an engaging and interactive manner. With input from the report's authors, a 2-minute animated video was launched on 1 December 2022 to commemorate Antarctica Day. The video, titled 'Our future depends on us' was specifically tailored for easy sharing on social media.

The response to the video has been overwhelmingly positive, garnering over 11,000 views across SCAR's various social media channels and an additional 1,600 views on SCAR's YouTube channel, thereby making it one of SCAR's most successful communications product so far. Emphasising the importance of effective science communication, the PO has since authored a [blog article for the ISC](#), providing a

comprehensive overview of the key findings from the ACCE report and the making of the video.

SCAR Website

The current SCAR website, in operation since 2016, was identified as needing improvement and modernisation in terms of user experience and overall layout. Furthermore, concerns arose regarding the sustainability and support for the existing content management system, Joomla.

Consequently, the focus of the 2023 communications efforts revolved around a substantial overhaul of the SCAR website. After gathering quotes of different providers in the spring of 2023, the design agency Union 10 Design were identified.

The budget tentatively set aside for the website redevelopment is 15,000 USD. The ongoing maintenance and hosting cost for the website will be around 120 GBP/month.

A website designer and developer, with support of the current website developer, have been employed to help with migrating the current SCAR website to a more modern and user-friendly content management system, WordPress. The new website will use the content management system WordPress, offering a stable and improved system for the future.

The primary objective of this website redevelopment was to improve the user experience, make the website easier to navigate and enhance the way information is displayed and managed. To achieve this, the menu structure was reworked and a new wireframe and layout conceptualised. This gives the website a modern and fresh look, whilst making the back-end of the page easier to maintain. The new site is expected to be more robust, ensuring GDPR compliance throughout and adhering to accessibility standards for users with special needs. Integrated Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is set to enhance content discoverability, while select pages were reworked and edited to update content and improve readability.

An essential aspect of this website transition was the transfer of the existing SCAR library, comprising over 2,500 documents, to the new site. Additionally, the layout of the group and programme sites underwent revisions to improve the presentation of complex information. The aspiration is that the new website will engage the community better, make it easier to find information, subscribe to news and engage in SCAR's activities.

Following a successful rebuild of the wireframe, the team is currently working on transferring the content of the old site onto the new and it is hoped that the new website will launch in mid-October.

Appendix 1

Uptake and Engagement of SCAR's Social Media Channels

Social media analytic tools allow GDPR compliant tracking of engagement rates, open rates, number of subscribers and other data. The Secretariat has also started tracking data for the website to assess website performance. Results are encouraging, e.g., open and click rates for the newsletter are consistently higher than industry average.

Numbers as of 1st September 2023

- Mailchimp subscribers:
 - o 4,425 members
 - o 387 subscribers gained since September 2022
- Average newsletter open rate: 41,76%
 - o Industry benchmark: 18%
- Average newsletter click rate: 8,9%
 - o Industry bench mark: 2,1%
- Twitter followers:
 - o 9,975 followers
 - o 1,430 followers gained since September 2022
- Facebook group membership:
 - o 6,147 members
 - o 207 followers gained since September 2022
- Facebook page:
 - o 3,309 followers
 - o 801 followers gained since September 2022
- YouTube:
 - o 874 subscribers
 - o 134 subscribers gained since September 2022
 - o 84.1k views

Appendix 2 – see attachment

Wireframes new SCAR website

(Note that these are a work in progress and should indicate the overall layout. The wording and content for these pages are not yet finalised.)