

International Council for Science

SCAR report

No 25
June 2006

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The SCAR Communications Plan



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC RESEARCH

at the

Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom

SCAR Report

SCAR Report is an irregular series of publications, started in 1986 to complement SCAR Bulletin. Its purpose is to provide SCAR National Committees and other directly involved in the work of SCAR with the full texts of reports of SCAR Standing Scientific Groups and Group of Experts meetings, that had become too extensive to be published in the Bulletin, and with more comprehensive material from Antarctic Treaty meetings.

SCAR Bulletin

SCAR Bulletin, a quarterly publication of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, carries reports of SCAR meetings, short summaries of SCAR Standing Scientific Groups, Action Groups and Groups of Experts meetings, notes, reviews, and articles, and material from Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings, considered to be of interest to a wide readership.

The SCAR Communications Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of SCAR's five primary goals is *"to communicate scientific information about the Antarctic region to the public."* Accordingly, the SCAR Delegates meeting in Bremerhaven in October 2004 approved development of a Communication Plan as a key management tool for achieving SCAR's long-term goals. This strategic decision accords with the recognition by SCAR's parent body, ICSU, in its Strategic Plan 2006-2012, that: *"Scientists and their representative organisations have to accept increasing responsibility and develop new mechanisms to share their understanding with many different stakeholders in society. Renewed efforts have to be made to ensure that [the voice of the science community] is heard where it is most needed."*

The overall objectives of the SCAR Communications Plan are to:

- raise the visibility of SCAR and its activities;
- promote the concepts that inspire SCAR's agenda;
- raise awareness of the importance of scientific research in the Antarctic region;
- ensure successful implementation of SCAR's research programmes and activities;
- develop cooperation with partners and supporters;
- mobilise human and financial resources;
- link Secretariat staff more effectively with the SCAR Executive Committee, National Committees, scientific activities and programmes, and partners;
- link SCAR more effectively with other Antarctic organisations; and
- help to build the capacity of new Members to enable them to participate in and benefit from SCAR activities and programmes.

The Plan identifies a suite of target communities or audiences, each of which will require the SCAR message tailored in a different way. Because many of these communities are at the national level, the task of communicating SCAR's message has to be shared between the SCAR Secretariat acting centrally and at the international level, and the National SCAR Committees acting nationally and at the local level.

Key audiences for the SCAR message include: the scientific research community; the pre-university school population; the general public, including the media; policy makers; decision-makers and funders; and SCAR's management.

The Plan describes a variety of communications tools that may be adapted for the purpose at hand, and a mechanism for evaluating the performance of communication efforts.

Where appropriate, SCAR's communications at national and/or international levels should be carried out jointly with the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programmes (COMNAP).

The Plan was approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, July 11-13, 2005, following consultation with national committees and delegates by e-mail.

1. INTRODUCTION

SCAR's new vision is *"To establish through scientific research and international cooperation a broad understanding of the nature of Antarctica, the role of Antarctica in the Earth System, and the effects of global change on Antarctica."*

To achieve that vision SCAR must improve communications with the outside world so as to earn the public support necessary for its programmes to succeed, and internally to ensure that its programmes are both high quality and effective. Communication is essential in all aspects of SCAR's work, to ensure that scientists, policymakers and decision makers understand the significance and value of SCAR's activities and are willing to support them. Where feasible SCAR should also do what it can to inform the wider public about Antarctic issues.

Communication is not solely a function of the SCAR Secretariat. If we are to succeed in the challenging task of raising awareness of the importance of Antarctic issues to society, and of SCAR's role in addressing them, the national SCAR committees have a vital role to play.

Building SCAR's reputation and image demand communications that:

- raise the visibility of SCAR and its activities;
- promote the concepts that inspire SCAR's agenda;
- raise awareness of the importance of scientific research in the Antarctic region;
- ensure successful implementation of SCAR's research programmes and activities;
- develop cooperation with partners and supporters;
- mobilise human and financial resources;
- link Secretariat staff more effectively with the SCAR Executive Committee, National Committees, scientific activities and programmes, and partners;
- link SCAR more effectively with other Antarctic organisations; and
- help to build the capacity of new Members to enable them to participate in and benefit from SCAR activities and programmes.

The SCAR Delegates meeting in Bremerhaven in October 2004 agreed that one of SCAR's five primary goals was "to communicate scientific information about the Antarctic region to the public.", and approved development of a Communication Plan as a key management tool for achieving SCAR's long-term goals.

This strategic decision accords with the recognition by SCAR's parent body, ICSU, in its Strategic Plan 2006-2012, that: *"Scientists and their representative organisations have to accept increasing responsibility and develop new mechanisms to share their understanding with many different stakeholders in society. Renewed efforts have to be made to ensure that [the voice of the science community] is heard where it is most needed."* ICSU's stated goal is "to ensure a greater awareness of the valuable contribution of science to society, and improved mutual understanding between science and other sectors of society, with a particular focus on ICSU's scientific priorities." To that end ICSU intends to "develop a strategy for improving public communication on international scientific priority issues."

As noted above, communication is not a subject for the SCAR Secretariat to address by itself. Effective communication calls for the development of a 'culture of communication', in which all SCAR scientists and staff nationally and internationally see themselves as having a responsibility to communicate both between themselves and with the outside world, to ensure the success of SCAR's primary goals and objectives. Underpinning that, of course, is the need to ensure that we are all 'singing the same song', which is represented by the SCAR Strategic Plan.

2. THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Communications Plan described below is a strategic plan, not an implementation plan. It outlines what we wish to achieve with current resources, and requires that the outcomes can be easily assessed and course corrections made as needed. It is intended as a blueprint for the guidance of individual scientists, national committees, delegates, executive officers and the secretariat. It does not specify precisely who will do what, nor in what time frame. Local contingencies will determine precise details.

The Delegates and the Executive will use the Plan to keep communications on target, and to provide the basis for decisions on communications.

The key goals of the Plan are:

- to establish SCAR as the premier international agency where scientists, policy makers, and journalists come for information with respect to international scientific issues in the Antarctic region;
- to increase awareness of SCAR activities within the SCAR community (Members, and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean science community), and within the wider global scientific community including ICSU and its constituent bodies;
- to establish SCAR programmes as preferred targets for the national and international donor community, to increase funding for SCAR's science;
- to attract the next generation of polar scientists, engineers and leaders, and to capture the interest of the public and decision makers by improving public communication on Antarctic priority scientific issues, explaining among other things why scientific research on Antarctica and the Southern ocean is important to all people.
- to improve the dissemination of information within the organisation, between the Secretariat, the Executive, Delegates and Members and the Antarctic science community.

The Plan will be developed by the Secretariat, in consultation with Members, Officers and the Executive. One of the Vice Presidents will have a special responsibility for Communication, and will work with the Secretariat to keep communications under review and to advise on ways in which communications can be improved.

3. TARGETTING THE AUDIENCE

The essence of good communications lies in disseminating messages in a targeted and efficient manner to provoke a desired response or achieve a desired outcome. Messages must be tailored to the needs of target audiences. Much of this inevitably can only be done at the national level.

SCAR's target audiences will include:

- The scientific research community
- Young and potential new scientific researchers
- The pre-university school population
- The general public, including the media and NGOs
- Policy Makers (including the ATCM and other relevant Intergovernmental agencies);
- Decision Makers and funders
- SCAR's management (Members, Officers and Secretariat)

For each audience we must first establish whom it includes, and what their needs for information are. Knowing the audience and its needs will help to establish what we want to achieve from that particular audience in the way of a desired outcome. We will then be able to determine what to communicate and how to do it. Finally we will need to determine the right time and the right place for that particular communication. . In all of this, SCAR should seek to make an addition to the existing national efforts, and – given limited resources - must consider where the most effective focus might lie.

Communication is about telling a story. In dealing with the public, schools and the media, and indeed with many other audiences, it is essential to bear in mind that they are only interested in issues, not in institutions or their components. And they have far greater interest in results (outcomes achieved) than in activities. Nobody is interested in our holding a meeting, only in the fact that we are using it to address a critical issue so that we can determine how something or other may behave in response to changing circumstances.

Making news demands a story and a 'hook' – the event you hang your story onto to turn it into news. Timing is of the essence. Hooks for news are tied to time, and will usually contain the word 'today' (or perhaps 'tomorrow'). Analytical reports containing statistics (e.g. on the extent of sea-ice, or on the speeds of glaciers) provide excellent opportunities to attract media interest. Media can be attracted to conferences or meetings on the eve of the event, when the story can focus on the issue and the stakes involved. Good news stories and press releases always have the news in the opening sentence; the rest is explanation.

Much of the success of achieving the desired outcome will depend on actions by national SCAR bodies, rather than international action by the SCAR Secretariat.

3.1 The Scientific Research Community

This audience includes all scientists active in research on Antarctica or the Southern Ocean. It is clear that many in this community are unfamiliar with SCAR. Considerable work is required by those who are in the SCAR community to interest and attract those who are not. In addition, we wish to influence the more general scientific community that has interests in global problems to the solution of which Antarctic research may make a contribution. SCAR must continue efforts to raise its profile by increasing awareness of and participation in its activities and programmes. Better communications with the other environmental bodies of ICSU are desirable, and with ICSU itself.

National SCAR Committees: key role in working with scientists at the national level;

SCAR Secretariat: key role at the level of international scientific organisations.

3.2 Young And Potential New Scientific Researchers

The objective here is to provide the kinds of information that may help to recruit new and future research scientists, and to increase awareness of Antarctic issues among university undergraduate and post-graduate students.

National SCAR Committees: In large part this is a national responsibility whose success will depend on the activities of national SCAR committees.

SCAR Secretariat: SCAR centrally will not have enough resources to make a significant impact in this area.

3.3 The Pre-University School Population

Stimulating young people to go into science is a generic wish, and Antarctic science is excellent for this purpose, not least because it concerns one of nature's last wilderness frontiers where difficulties combine to create a sense of adventure from involvement, and where there is huge potential for exploration and discovery. Much of this kind of interest can be stimulated at a national level, for example through the creation of Schools Information Packages that are directly related to the goals of the national school curriculum. Teaching the teachers can also pay dividends.

National SCAR Committees: the differences between the national curricula of different countries are so great, and the target community so large, that this area has to be seen as a national responsibility.

SCAR Secretariat: SCAR is happy to offer its web site as a vehicle for posting national schools information packages as examples of best practice for others to use.

3.4 The General Public, Including The Media And NGOs

Here the goal is to help the public become more aware of, excited about, and supportive of scientific research on Antarctic and Southern Ocean issues, including understanding why the Antarctic region and Antarctic region research are important to all people. Included in "the public" are those Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have environmental interests, and which bring together large groups of environmentally aware citizens. The press, radio and TV can all be extremely useful vehicles for conveying the SCAR message, as can the communication organs of NGOs. Antarctic tourists and tour operators form a special subset of "the public". Efforts should be made to encourage writers, artists, filmmakers and reporters to engage themselves in Antarctic activities.

National SCAR Committees: have a key role to play here in getting to know and influence their local media, and their national public.

SCAR Secretariat: SCAR is well placed to work with the world's main scientific press outlets (like Nature, Science, etc), and with international NGOs.

3.5 Policy Makers (Including The ATCM And Other Relevant Intergovernmental Agencies)

SCAR needs to ensure that those who attend the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings are fully aware of SCAR's specific mission and activities, and of the importance and value of Antarctic region scientific research, and that they use SCAR to best advantage to provide scientific advice on key issues affecting Antarctic policy. One way in which this is achieved is through the activities of SCAR's Antarctic Treaty System Committee; another is through the annual SCAR Lecture to the ATCM. Interactions may also be desirable with other intergovernmental bodies, such as the World Meteorological Organisation, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, which have scientific interests in the Antarctic region, not least to optimise the potential for collaboration and cooperation, decrease duplication, and provide further means of disseminating information.

National SCAR Committees: can play a useful role by interacting with their national representatives to the ATCM.

SCAR Secretariat: this is a primary SCAR role

3.6 Decision Makers And Funders

Research cannot happen without funding, and research in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean is particularly expensive given the difficulties of logistics and the harsh environment. Government ministers, government agency heads, research foundations and other potential donors have to be convinced of the relevance, excellence and value of Antarctic research, which will only be funded through competition with other claimants. These agents are also the sources of investment for building the capacity of all SCAR Members.

National SCAR Committees: have a key role to play in seeking out and securing from a wide variety of national agencies and foundations funds for research that contributes to SCAR activities and programmes (in the case of Europe this would include the European Commission; in the case of Asia this may include ASEAN)

SCAR Secretariat: should focus on seeking out and securing funds from agencies and foundations willing to fund international activities, working with or in support of national SCAR committees where appropriate.

3.7 SCAR's Management (Members, Officers, Secretariat)

Efficient administration and the effective development and application of policies demands clear internal communication within the SCAR system, and clear designation of responsibilities for the various roles that SCAR assumes.

National SCAR Committees: have a responsibility to keep the SCAR Secretariat informed about their national Antarctic activities

SCAR Secretariat: will work to continually improve SCAR's internal and external communications systems

4. MEDIA & METHODS

Selecting the media or methods by which the various communications efforts will be implemented is specific to each audience and crucial to achieving the desired outcome. Below is an inventory of some possible media and methods of communication. Annex 1 links target audiences to media and methods of approach, and to desired outcomes or goals.

Many of the activities that form part of the Communications Plan are already in place, the one with the biggest impact being the biennial Open Science Conference, which attracted 1000+ people to Bremen in July 2004. SCAR's new web site attracted 42,000 hits per month in January 2005, as compared with around 16,000 in January 2004.

E-Mail: e-mail now provides the main means of communication internally within SCAR and between SCAR and the outside world. Development of list-servers for target audiences would increase effectiveness and outreach.

Websites: SCAR has developed an attractive and easy to navigate Website. It features regularly updated NEWS and EVENTS sections, to keep readers abreast of current developments, and an ANTARCTIC INFORMATION site for general questions about Antarctica and Antarctic science. Standing Scientific Groups are responsible for maintaining information about their research groups on the web site. The subgroup sites could do with having a more obvious corporate appearance.

Newsletters: a quarterly electronic newsletter is now e-mailed to selected audiences, made available on the Website, and can be printed on demand. Efforts should be made to provide space in it for Members to communicate their own messages, and for letters to encourage dialogue.

Press Releases: are issued for key events, and should be kept very brief and highly focused, preferably with one key message per release.

SCAR Reports: an important part of SCAR's activities continues to be the organization of expert meetings, and conferences. Reports of these events should ideally be prepared within one month of the event and circulated to the targeted audience via email, as well as being available on SCAR Websites. Hard copy will be available on request.

SCAR Bulletins: will continue to report on such topics as meetings of the SCAR Executive and Delegates, and the ATCM. They will be distributed in the same way as SCAR reports.

Brochures and Pamphlets: text should be brief and accompanied by images and web addresses for those who would like more information. Different documents may be needed for different audiences.

Meetings, Conferences, Seminars and Workshops: provide useful fora in which to disseminate information about SCAR and its programmes in the form of presentations, leaflets, pamphlets and brochures. A standardized PowerPoint presentation is available on the Website. A SCAR PowerPoint template is available on the Members' site for those who wish to make up their own presentation. A SCAR poster can be downloaded from the SCAR Website. The biennial SCAR Open Science Conference provides a new vehicle for attracting young scientists, for networking the scientific community, for highlighting advances, for talking to the press, and for exhibits of various kinds.

Schools Information Packages: have been developed by some Members, and should be made available to others via the SCAR web site, to provide each Member with examples of best practice.

Networks: provide a powerful means of disseminating information about specific activities to groups interested in those activities, and should be widely developed by SCAR's subsidiary groups, with encouragement for continual growth. Each subsidiary group should develop a specialized means of communication (e.g. newsletter) with its network. National SCAR communities should develop national networks and newsletters.

Branding: SCAR now has a clear 'brand' image through use of the SCAR logo (available in full form or with just a plain line around the margin); all subsidiary groups should make full use of the logo.

Advertising: where resources permit, key SCAR meetings should be widely advertised in scientific journals and newsletters; reports of the outcomes of meetings should be similarly profiled.

Highlights of Research: all too often SCAR's communications focus on what we are going to do, and on meetings we are going to hold. We need to focus AS WELL on reporting on what great achievements came out of the research that we coordinated (and that probably would not otherwise have been achieved, or not achieved as quickly).

Exhibitions: SCAR's poster can be downloaded for display at relevant exhibitions, along with brochures and/or pamphlets.

External Coordination: many national groups may be conducting communication activities complementary to one another. There may be considerable value in bringing such elements together. This could be achieved if Members are willing to make their activities accessible through the SCAR web site.

Internal Coordination: To improve communications internally, Chief Officers of SSGs are invited to attend Executive Committee meetings, as ex officio members.

Circulation of Documents: Documents for plenary sessions, including financial projections and reports from Chief Officers, will be circulated to Delegates at least 3 months in advance of the Delegates meeting, to allow time for their consideration at the national level prior to the meeting.

Attention to Language: Recognising that English is the language of communication in SCAR, every attempt will be made to ensure that those who do not have English as a first language fully understand the documentation and what is being discussed in meetings. For ease of understanding, SCAR papers should be presented in Plain English, using simple direct language. At Delegates' meetings working documents should be projected from a computer onto a screen at the time the document is being discussed, to facilitate achieving agreement on changes to documents. Meetings of the operating groups should follow the same practice.

Translation: Given the limitation on resources available to the SCAR Secretariat, where Members feel that translations would be desirable it would be helpful if individual Members would offer to translate documents on behalf of others where they share a common language (e.g. such as Spanish).

Action Lists: Action lists indicating the actions required, the person or organisation responsible for carrying them out, and the time frame in which each action is to be discharged, should be produced and published for all meetings of the governing bodies and operating units, as a means of communication and of keeping track of progress.

5. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

In order to assess the success of communications efforts and actions, feedback is needed on these activities. This will require storing or collecting information on, for example:

- the numbers of press releases, articles, stories we issue
- the numbers of press articles mentioning SCAR activities;
- the opinions of national delegations and of ICSU on the success of our efforts;
- website statistics (numbers of site visits; types of visitors);
- the numbers of requests for information we received (phone, email, paper, etc)

Delegates should evaluate this feedback at their biennial meetings to determine:

- the efficacy of the adopted strategy
- the next phase of the strategy (status quo, diversification, expansion).

ANNEX 1 ACTION MATRIX

Targeted Audience	Medium/Methods	Desired Outcome / Goal
(i) Scientific Research Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme/Project Brochure -Newsletter -Websites -Exhibits at meetings and symposia -Workshops, Conferences, meetings -Networks -Journal advertising SCAR Reports/Bulletins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Raise awareness and interest (ensure that SCAR activities are actively promoted at all levels. -Attract expertise to develop and Implement SCAR projects -From start include outreach part in research projects related to SCAR. -Attract cooperation. - Involve national research facilities in SCAR programmes; - Provide funding at the national and international level;
(ii) Young and potential new scientific researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Programme/Project Brochure -Newsletter -Websites -Conferences -Networks -Exhibits at meetings and symposia - Fellowships - PhD networks & workshops - PhD and post doc stipends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recruit new and future research scientists and collaborators. - Increase awareness of polar issues at post-secondary educational institutions and research institutions
(iii) pre-university school population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct Contact / Establish a focal point - Use existing programs and initiatives - Include polar themes in science and history contests/ programs - Use modern web based technology for remote participation and interactive programs - Newsletter - Websites - Train the trainer' kits - Training workshops - Information Packs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased awareness and understanding of polar issues by learning through the excitement of discovery of the polar regions. -Create the foundation for future interest in science
(iv) general public, including the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advisories of SCAR activities and meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Raise media profile -Increase awareness in the

media and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press releases, media invites - Network of polar reporters, artists, authors, film producers. - Web site, - Links to museums, books, stamps. - Special events, exhibitions and competitions. - Targeted information material (CD, DVD, video) 	<p>general public and create support for SCAR activities and programmes</p> <p>-Public to understand Polar regions and Polar research important to all people on earth</p>
(v) Policy Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brochures - ATCM - Specialized newsletters - Talks and Exhibits at meetings - SCAR Reports/Bulletins - Website - Brochure 	<p>-Strengthen dialogue and links between policy makers and the research community</p> <p>-Increase understanding of the research goals, and possibilities for using the outcome of the results</p>
(vii) Decision Makers and funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Brochure -Meetings -Newsletter -Websites 	<p>-Increased awareness of and support for SCAR activities</p> <p>-Influence policy, and decision-making with respect to SCAR activities.</p> <p>Increase financial support of SCAR activities</p>
(viii) SCAR's management (Members, Officers and Secretariat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -e-mail -Newsletters -Coordinating activities -Distribution of documents - Action Lists 	<p>-Increase efficiency and effectiveness</p> <p>-Improve information flow</p>