

## **COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT SECTION 2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

Through a number of activities, the Communication and Engagement (C&E) Section works toward 1) professionalizing science communication and engagement efforts within and beyond ESA, and 2) providing mentorship to ecologists interested in communication and engagement or transitioning to careers in science communication.

### **Membership**

The Communication and Engagement Section has 123 members on our official member roster as of our most recent report from ESA (April 20, 2020).

### **Section Leadership**

- Elected Officers: The 2019-2020 officers were Kirsten Schwarz (Chairperson), Robert Newman (Chairperson-elect), Skylar Bayer (Secretary), and Annaliese Hettinger (Past Chairperson). The 2020-2021 officers will be Robert Newman (Chairperson), Elizabeth Cook (Chairperson-elect), Skylar Bayer (Secretary), and Kirsten Schwarz (Past Chairperson).
- Student Section Liaison: In 2017 we established a Student Section Liaison position. Emily Whalen served as our Student Section Liaison in 2019-2020.
- Policy Section Liaison: In 2018 we established a Policy Section Liaison position that is currently held by Linh Anh Cat.
- Social Media Coordinator: In 2019 we established a Social Media Coordinator position to facilitate communication through our social media outlets. Jessica Salcido served in this position for 2019-2020. We maintain a Facebook Group: ESA Communication and Engagement Section and regularly update the #scicommjob hashtag on Twitter. The Section also posts on Twitter via officer accounts using the hashtags #ESASciComm and #EngageESA. In November 2018 we started a Twitter account for the Section @ESA\_SciComm and have reached over 500 followers. Section co-founder and past officer Bethann Merkle has been our webmaster from the beginning, and she continues to maintain our website and blog.

### **Governance**

In 2018 we piloted a virtual business meeting in lieu of an in-person business meeting at the annual meeting. Our objective was to make our business meeting accessible to members who may not have been able to attend the annual meeting. As attendance was comparable to past in-person meetings, we continued with this format in 2019, holding a virtual business meeting on September 12, 2019.

### **Long Range Planning Grant (LRPG)**

In spring 2019, the Section received a LRPG to support the establishment of two new communication and engagement awards: 1) Communication and Engagement in Practice

Award (\$400) and 2) Communication and Engagement Best Poster Award (\$200). These awards will recognize the intellectual, scientific, and civic contributions made by current ESA members active in public engagement and science communication. Both of these awards were launched in 2020. The LRPG funds will help our section establish the awards, providing partial support for the first five years of the program. Award details are available here:

<https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/about/awards/>.

## Website

The C&E Section website is located at: [www.esa.org/communication-engagement](http://www.esa.org/communication-engagement). The website provides current information about the ESA Annual Meeting, Section information, and a number of curated resources to help ecologists refine and develop their communication skills. Topics covered include science writing, audio/visual, graphic design, drawing and sketching, and photography. We also produce and host communication and engagement resources (available here: <https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/resources/>), including three blog series:

- #MySciComm series – The #MySciComm Series explores the personal and professional journeys of science communicators, including the joys, struggles, and helpful resources that surfaced along their way. #MySciComm also showcases the wide range of types of SciComm that people can do, from photography and illustration to serving as an institutional press officer, doing public engagement research, and so much more. The #MySciComm series was retired in 2020, and can be viewed here: <https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/category/myscicomm/>. Now, several past and present leaders in C&E are discussing developing this series into a book.
- SciComm Lit Review series – This is a series reviewing books and other scicomm resources: <https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/category/lit-review/>. Reviews provide unique content about literature that has direct or indirect relevance to the wide range of scicomm careers, approaches, and interests of Section members.
- Resource of the Week series – We post a single link and brief synopsis once a week: <https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/category/resource-of-the-week/>. These posts highlight resources for science communication and engagement and include websites, books, blog posts, and other resources. ESA members are encouraged to contact us directly to share resources they would like to highlight.

## Newsletter

We send out a monthly email newsletter to share Section news, highlight member accomplishments and projects, point out communication and engagement resources available online and on our blog, and more. We have received several positive responses regarding our content and packaging of the newsletter. We hope that members and friends of the section are able to use the newsletter as a communication and engagement resource. We are always open to feedback and contributions to improve the newsletter. Anyone can subscribe to email updates and view the newsletter archive on our website: <https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/resources/newsletter/>.

## **Annual Meeting**

Each year, we host a range of workshops, special sessions, and informal social activities. We also maintain a list of SciComm/engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion activities and sessions hosted by others at annual ESA meetings: <https://www.esa.org/communication-engagement/annual-meeting/>.

## **2019 Annual Meeting**

Funds from our 2018 LRPG supported non-member participation at the Annual Meeting through two activities: 1) Earth Stewardship Initiative and, 2) the Improving Environmental Decision-Making Through Integrated Governance, Public Engagement, and Translational Approaches symposium. We also used 2018 LRPG funds to convene a working group during the ESA 2019 Annual Meeting focused on how to institutionalize community engagement activities around future ESA annual meetings. This discussion will be continued at ESA 2020 through a virtual presentation and live Q&A session - Cultivating a Culture of Community Engagement at ESA Annual Meetings.

We hosted our second joint mixer with the Policy Section and the Union of Concerned Scientists, which was well-attended and provided a great opportunity for networking.

Our fifth annual #SketchYourScience activity was a hit and attracted hundreds of new potential members. At our booth we also solicited feedback from ESA members on section activities that they would like to see continued or extended. New in 2019, notecards with original artwork by C&E member Bethann Garramon Merkle were sold at our booth.

## **2020 Annual Meeting**

The C&E Section will co-host our 3rd Annual Joint Networking Mixer (virtually) with expanded participation from ten human dimension sections/chapters and the Union of Concerned Scientists. Our section contributed \$500 towards registration grants issued by the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Section. Current C&E officers are co-organizers of a short course led by past chair Bethann Garramon Merkle, Making Science Matter in a Changing World: Leveraging the Science of Science Communication in Ecology. Although this short course was cancelled due to the shift to a virtual format, we plan to offer the workshop in 2021. The C&E Section will also host a special session, Cultivating a Culture of Community Engagement, in which two youth climate activists from Salt Lake City, Ari Grace and Raquel Juarez, both supported by an ESA Annual Meeting Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship, will present. All Section-related sessions and activities planned for ESA 2020 are listed on our website.

Submitted by:

Kirsten Schwarz, Chairperson

Robert Newman, Chairperson-elect

Skylar Bayer, Secretary

Annaliese Hettinger, Past Chairperson