



SCICOMM SECTION

Moving from why we communicate about science to improving how we do it.

ANNUAL Report 2016

The Science Communication Section is now in its second year, and continues to grow its membership. The 2016 ESA membership cycle marked the first year that people could officially join the section as due-paying members. As of July 7, 2016, the Section had 77 members on its official roster.

The objectives of the Section are as follows: (1) promote and support the practice of traditional and emerging science communication approaches by ecologists and science communicators within ESA's membership; (2) sponsor science communication training opportunities for scientists, professional development activities for science communicators, and facilitate collaboration among members through symposia, organized oral sessions, special sessions, and social events at the annual meeting and regionally; (3) support ESA's endeavors including but not limited to interdisciplinary initiatives, policy statements, regional and national conferences, and activities of the Public Affairs Office; (4) work with other sections (e.g. Student, Education, and Policy Sections) to facilitate student participation in science communication training and exploration of communication career opportunities; and (5) formalize a community of members that have science communication experience.

The Science Communication Section had an active presence at the 2015 Annual Meeting in Baltimore. Section co-founders Bethann Merkle, Clarisse Hart and Molly Mehling led a workshop called "[Communicating Science Vividly](#)" where they guided participants through hands-on exercises (drawing, writing) to build their skills in conveying complex scientific concepts to broad audiences. The workshop gave rise to a wildly popular activity at the Section booth and in social media space: #sketchyourscience. Hundreds of meeting attendees picked up pen and paper to illustrate (and explain) their research through doodles and drawings. Images and related social media have been curated [here](#). We also had a short business meeting (August 10, 2015) that allowed members to share their goals for the section, brainstorm future activities, and discuss section leadership. The meeting was followed by an informal social at the Alewife pub.

To help us better understand our membership and chart a course for the future, we created an online survey. We shared the survey at the Annual Meeting booth and

distributed via our mailing list and social media. Of the 74 respondents, over two-thirds indicated that they spent less than 25% of their time communicating science, suggesting that the majority of respondents value science communication, but it's not the primary focus of their professional activities. Respondents identified the following top three priorities for the section: (1) Skill-building workshops at ESA annual meetings; (2) Foster collaborations between ESA members and professional science communicators (including journalists, writers, illustrators, photographers, and videographers); and (3) Support a network of students through a formalized mentoring program and early career training.

The Science Communication Section again plans to have an active presence at the 2016 Annual Meeting. The section is sponsoring a [Science Communication Mentoring and Project Review](#) Workshop as well as an Ignite session called the [Up-Goer Five Challenge: Using Common Language to Communicate Your Science to the Public](#). We will be sharing a booth in the Exhibit Hall with the Science Policy Section and plan to reprise the #sketchyourscience activity. Our business meeting (to be followed by an informal social) is scheduled for Wednesday, August 10 at 6:30p.

In addition to blog posts that highlight upcoming events at the annual meeting, the Section website (<https://advancingecocomm.wordpress.com>) hosts 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. A goal for 2016-2017 is to transition this Wordpress-hosted website to the ESA server.

Other activities planned for 2016-2017: elect new officers (open election October 1); implement activities that support science communication professionals within our membership; propose sessions and workshops for 2017 annual meeting; and create a travel award program.

Submitted by:

Holly Menninger, Section Chair and co-founder

Bethann Garramon Merkle, Section co-founder, Secretary, and webmaster

Clarisse Hart, Section co-founder

Molly Mehling, Section co-founder