

There is one nomination for the position of National President of Australian Science Communicators for the upcoming AGM: Assoc Prof Joan Leach.

Joan has been nominated by Claire Harris and seconded by Nancy Longnecker.

Assoc Prof Joan Leach

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I am keen to become ASC's next President and to work with the National Council and executive to further strengthen ASC in 2014. I have already given some thought about a few of the issues (some discussed quite recently in the ASC online community) that I would pursue over the next year, if elected President.

First, though, a bit of background on me might be useful. I am Associate Professor and Convenor of the Postgraduate program in Science Communication at the University of Queensland. Having moved from Imperial College, London (Science Communication Group) and prior to that, the University of Pittsburgh (Rhetoric of Science Program), I am about to celebrate my 10th anniversary in Brisbane. Over that time, I have cemented my place in Australia's science communication community both on the academic front and on the practical front. I have global experience in science communication research and training and I frequently serve as reviewer, committee member and examiner for programs, PhDs and projects around the world. I publish in the field and have edited a tier 1 journal where I continue to serve on editorial board. I am also involved in Federal steering committees and have collaborated on practical science communication projects around the world. While I am first and foremost an academic, I always have an eye on applicability.

I am enormously proud of the growth of the field of science communication; some of my first students in science communication are now at the top of the field in media organisations, scientific institutions, NGOs, consultancies, and academia. Part of that pride resides in the diversity of what my students have done. I see Science Communication as a big umbrella that covers activity in science journalism and media, community engagement, informal education, advocacy, policy, evaluation, and research (and probably much more besides). I have always thought that this was the strength of the field. I also am currently on the National Committee for the History and Philosophy of Science at the Academy of Science. I have advocated strongly in this group that science communication is central not only to science, but also contributes to a broader awareness of what science means (and has meant), what the nature of science is, and how communication is central to both the doing and the dissemination of science.

Finally, why do I want to do this now? Over the last few years, my involvement in the "Inspiring Australia" strategy has meant opportunity to work with a wide range of ASC members. I value my fellow academic colleagues in Australia enormously (indeed, we rely on each other) and I've been inspired by what ASC members do when they are given resources and encouragement. I have been active in supporting the 2014 ASC conference in Brisbane and think some of our important conversations

will have pride of place then. I also have had the opportunity while visiting colleagues to go along to regional ASC meetings (some very robust, others needing a bit of a boost) and am aware of the different issues on the burner across the country. I have personally gained from being a member of ASC and of the science communication community in Australia—I have gained knowledge, insight, and professional support from ASC. I will now put my hand up in hopes of returning some of what I've gained.

The Issues:

Raising awareness of the field

While I think the field of science communication is increasingly recognised and respected, the ASC needs to be a continual presence on the national scene. ASC should be the 'go to' organisation when policy-makers and other institutions have questions about the field. I was somewhat taken aback in 2012 when the Office of Learning and Teaching wanted to create guidelines for Science Communication teaching and practice—and had no idea whom to ask. This is just one example of how important it is to have an advocate for the organization across research, teaching and learning, and engagement. Members in the ASC do all of these things and the organisation needs that recognition. I will make it a priority to move ASC and its members to the front of minds of key organisations when they are thinking about science and communication.

Benchmarking/Certification/'Professionalisation'

This issue is part of a conversation that Rod Lamberts and Will Grant pursued at the start of this year. I would like to pick up this conversation with members. On the one hand, we now have data from Inspiring Australia about the kinds of engagement and communication that goes on in Australia. We are well-placed to benchmark our activity globally and part of ASC's mission has been to make these activities and their evaluation visible to ASC members (thank you Jesse Shore, Jenni Metcalfe, and Nancy Longnecker). Certification and professionalisation in the field are trickier matters worthy of cautious investigation. On a practical front, though, one interesting emerging trend in MOOCs is to use them for continuing professional development and even certification in key or emerging skills (I recently did the data visualisation course from the Knight Centre in the US). AusSMC is great partner here in online briefings and I know ASC members who do similar things. This will be something I will explore with members over the coming year.

Special Interest Groups

At least one of these already exists within ASC. The SCERN (Science Communication Education and Research Network) spearheaded by Professor Sue Stocklmayer at ANU met 4 years ago in Canberra. The conversations that started there have continued and have actually placed this network in good stead for helping to impact and participate in (and even constructively criticise) the "Inspiring Australia" programs when they arrived. Online, members seem to have an appetite for more of these. I will make it a priority to investigate what ASC can do to 'seed' more of these productive networks of members.

Ethical Guidelines/Code

I have listened to the debates about ethical guidelines for science communication with great interest. Some of you may know that Iowa State University held its 3 conference on Science Communication Ethics in 2013 (and are putting together a useful volume from the discussions there). This issue has local interest as well as global interest—it seems time we put it higher on the agenda for ASC. We can certainly pursue this in February at the ASC conference in Brisbane as well as at regional meetings and online. A national guideline does not seem out of reach. More conversation about applying such a guideline is probably needed. I'd be very keen to have those conversations.