

DRAFT - ERF Strategic Planning - Overview - Publications

Vision

Producing and disseminating information are central to the Estuarine Research Federation's mission. Through our journal *Estuaries* (henceforth, *Estuaries and Coasts*), the ERF Newsletter, and Coastal and Estuarine Science News (CESN), the Federation has promoted research in estuarine and coastal systems, supported education of scientists, decision-makers, and the public, and facilitated communication among these groups. An overarching goal of the Federation is to make its communication products the recognized leaders in communicating estuarine and coastal science to scientists, educators, and managers.

Motivation

In the 1998 and 2000 member surveys, 40% or more of members gave ERF a score of 9 or 10 (with 10 being the highest) in the areas relating to the quality and relevance of *Estuaries*, quality and relevance of our newsletter, accessibility of products and services, use of electronic communications, and publication format. (Overall, ERF performed at or near the top of the peer group of scientific societies in all categories.) Of all the questions asked on the surveys, questions about the journal received the most responses. In written comments, our members suggested that we needed to maintain or enhance the quality of the journal via editorial and review policies and that we should continue to work to decrease the time for review, revision and publication. Based on the survey results, we concluded that the membership is happy with the increasing use of technology by ERF – especially the move to online journal services. Respondents also made suggestions about ways to improve the quality and scope of the journal through the use of special issues and guest editors.

ERF remains committed to advancing the understanding and wise stewardship of coastal systems worldwide. With a renewed sense of urgency, the Federation seeks to increase the effectiveness with which the results of scientific research are communicated. We envision improvements in our current products and development of creative new sources of information. The establishment of the Publications Committee in 2005 marks the beginning of an exciting new phase in the evolution of ERF's communication products. In the rapidly changing landscape of printed and web-based communications, the Federation needs to remain vigilant and proactive in planning future services and products. Indeed, the real prospect of printed journals becoming obsolete in the next decade creates a serious financial dilemma for scientific societies. How best to position ourselves for minimum impact and maximum achievement will rely on the leadership of the Federation's officers, Board members, and Publication's Committee, but the collective wisdom and input of all society members will be necessary.

Objectives and Strategies

Four primary objectives have been identified, and three of them address *Estuaries and Coasts*.

- enhance the quality of our journal

- expand the geographical/international coverage and increase participation by researchers working in underrepresented scientific disciplines
- develop and maintain a fiscally sound business plan
- increase the readership of Coastal and Estuarine Science News (CESN)

Enhance the quality of our journal. Strategically, this can be accomplished by increasing the number of submissions of the highest quality and increasing the scientific rigor and the clarity of the journal's articles. We must increase awareness of ERF's mission and scope to a broad international audience, and all ERF members (especially the Editors-in-Chief and others most directly involved with the journal) must actively recruit submissions of the highest quality. Promotion of our desire to receive the best papers and provision of more specific guidelines for the preparation of excellent manuscripts and reviews are likely to result in better submissions. Extra efforts will be needed at every level of the peer review and editorial process. We need to develop indicators of quality and monitor "dashboards" for success. Input from authors and the readership will be essential in evaluating success, so specific questions need to be developed by the Publications Committee for inclusion in broad-based user surveys. Tracking of annual impact factor values will continue to provide an independent quantitative assessment of quality. Development of an "estuarine impact factor" based on the primary journals in which estuarine science is published might help us identify more specific strategies for increasing the quality of *Estuaries and Coasts*.

Expand the geographical/international coverage and increase participation by researchers working in underrepresented scientific disciplines. The scope of *Estuaries and Coasts* should include more of the world's estuaries, coastal systems, watersheds and coastal oceans. Similarly, the journal's contents should reflect a broader range of biological, geological, chemical, hydrological, and interdisciplinary sciences. These objectives could be accomplished by inviting authors working in targeted geographic or subject areas to submit manuscripts. Experts from outside of the U.S. and/or from less well covered coastal areas could be asked to develop review papers as well as original research contributions. The Publications Committee will need to identify and prioritize target areas and potential authors. The journal office will assist with translation services as necessary. New dashboards will need to be created and tracked along with other metrics of quality to evaluate success in this endeavor.

Develop and maintain a fiscally sound business plan that will ensure the highest quality communication products and generate income to support ERF's overall mission. The journal generates a large portion of the Federation's gross revenues every year and although most of those dollars are used for producing and delivering the journal, some additional dollars are usually available to support costs in other areas of the Federation's operation. As one of only a few sources of revenue, the journal (and future communication products) must be relied upon to support the overall budget. The Governing Board must work with the Managing Editor and Publications Committee to determine a target income goal for the coming year and specify strategies for achieving that goal. With a revenue target that exceeds costs by a certain amount, plans can be made to: increase the number of institutional subscribers, establish new subscription rates, and set the number of published pages based on expected costs of production per page. Increasing numbers of subscribers will require a determination of which libraries are not presently subscribing and a close monitoring of lapsed subscriptions. Special invitations to

subscribe and appeals to resubscribe must follow. Other sources of products-based revenue including special publications and web-based services need to be considered in an overall effort to balance the need to provide the best quality products with the need to provide financial support for the Federation's overall mission. All aspects of the Federation's interest in providing communication products must be considered in developing a fiscally sound business plan. Expenses need to be reduced wherever possible. Careful monitoring of both product quality and financial criteria will be necessary to achieve a healthy balance.

Increase the readership of Coastal and Estuarine Science News (CESN). One strategy is to identify all organizations and individuals who may benefit from access to CESN. Gaps in current distribution can be identified and a sample issue can be provided with information for continued (free) subscription. CESN should be more available to international audiences. Spanish and French translations of articles can be linked through the postings on the ERF web site. Monitoring of the subscriber list and feedback from recipients will guide the evolution of CESN and other ERF communication products for education and manager audiences.

Other activities and areas for future development. The ERF Newsletter continues to be our members' primary source of information about Governing Board activities, conferences, individual member accomplishments, affiliate society meetings, federal and regional programs, and upcoming journal contents. Its future success is contingent on the willingness of members to suggest and provide material for future issues.

The Federation needs to consider other communications products and services in the coming years. Development or sponsorship of books on special topics may provide an effective and perhaps profitable mechanism for disseminating information. Partnerships with other entities might be used to expand the scope of interests beyond topics and areas covered by *Estuaries and Coasts*. Future "Special Issues" of the journal might be offered through commercial publishers. ERF might consider starting another scientific journal or a magazine that provides science-based information to education and management audiences. Many options for expanding the ERF web site to support our communications mission remain unexplored.

Timelines for Action?

Resources Needed?

How to Measure Success?