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International Polar Lecture Series – Sustaining the Polar Day Idea After IPY4

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Introduction

During the Fourth International Polar Year (IPY4), several International Polar Day and Week events were held drawing international attention to the polar regions. These events were widely considered successful in reaching an international audience of educators, students, and others through online resources, multilingual lesson plans, real-time live events, and much more. Participation was tracked by having polar day participants launch “Virtual Balloons” (Figure 1) on the IPY.org website.

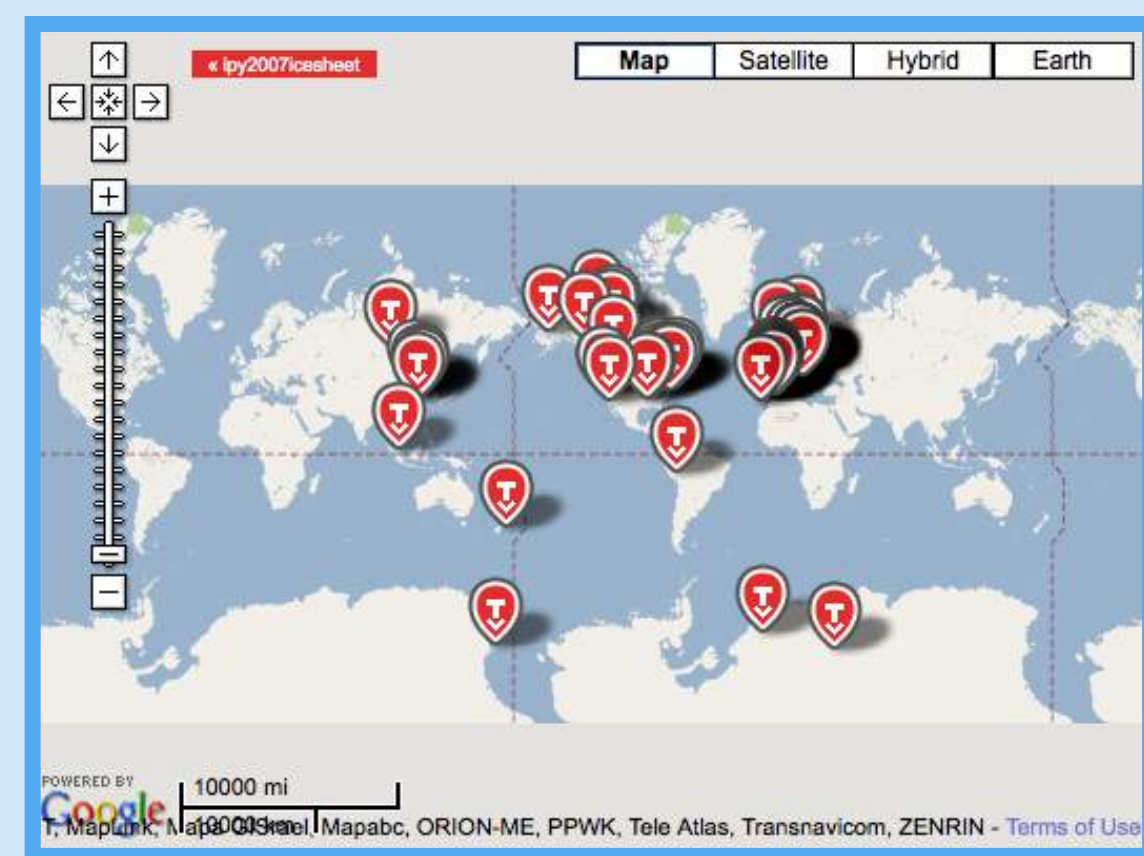


Figure 1: Virtual balloons are launched from participants during the Ice Sheet IPY Day.

Striving to reach a wider audience, including more members of the public and university students, the International Polar Year International Programme Office worked with the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) to facilitate an International Polar Lecture Series during the October 2009 and March 2010 International Polar Weeks. The International Polar Lecture Series activities not only provided tools and assistance to researchers interested in sharing their science and enthusiasm about the polar regions, but also helped to sustain the momentum of the IPY Days started in 2007.

Methods

The International Polar Lecture Series began as a grass roots effort to have researchers on the ground present in person to members of their universities, communities, and other local groups. Early career researchers were asked to give a presentation or arrange a guest lecture on polar research for a local group, such as Rotary, 4-H, Boy Scout/ Girl Scout troop, church groups, school associations, city councils, universities, or wherever their community gathers.

The invitation to participate was advertised in a variety of ways and to a number of polar research and education groups and organizations, including:

- APECS E-Mail List
- APECS Education & Outreach Committee
- APECS Council
- ARCUS's Arctic Info E-Mail List & Polar Education List
- IPY Newsletter
- International Antarctic Institute List
- IPY Teacher's Group & Education and Outreach Committee
- University of the Arctic

Professional Development

Based on the education, outreach, and event planning experiences of several APECS members, a suite of resources was made available on the APECS website to provide instruction and assistance with the event planning. Because many early career researchers are new to this kind of activity, we felt it was essential to provide some tools and a list of contacts for help and support as they prepared for the events.

The online resources at the APECS website included (Figure 2):

- Step-by-step checklist with task to be completed and other considerations
- Template for a flier to advertise the presentation
- Draft press release

By providing these resources to early career scientists interested in conducting education and outreach activities, we hope it will develop basic and essential skills in education and outreach. We also hope that by encouraging early career researchers to start small, that we can build confidence in communicating science in the next generation of polar researchers.

The resources continue to be provided on the APECS website. Eventually it would be great to make these part of a bigger collection of education and outreach resources for APECS members. Some of the content from the resources will also be in the Polar Science and Global Climate: An International Resource for Education & Outreach.



Figure 2: Resources for planning a lecture, including a draft press release, a PDF template flier (participants could fill in their information), and a checklist of considerations for planning.

Things We Learned

- APECS Members often hosted presenters, versus presenting themselves
- Participation was widespread in some regions and nations, while non-existent in others
- Continuous advertisement, particularly well before the Polar Week was essential
- According to Google Analytics, the International Lecture Series web pages were accessed approximately 300 times for each event in October and March

Ideas For the Future

- Continue the International Polar Days, perhaps in the form of an annual week like many other education campaigns such as National Chemistry Week, National Earth Science Week, or National Lab Day
- If possible, continue to have a central coordinating person or organization
- Maintain a singular web presence
- Track participation by people hosting events, perhaps by allowing them to submit their event via web form or show up in an online calendar
- Do more to receive post-event reports from presenters to better track audience demographics and presentations
- Continue to promote and provide resources for helping early career scientists conduct these events
- Build regional networks for additional support in conducting activities at the regional level

Building an International Network

Globally, presentations were tracked on the APECS website (October 2009) (Figure 3) and at IPY.org (March 2010). This created an instant global network, making one presentation feel like a part of a much larger international effort to educate the global public about the polar regions. Over 50 lectures were given in over ten countries in October 2009 and March 2010 (Figure 4).

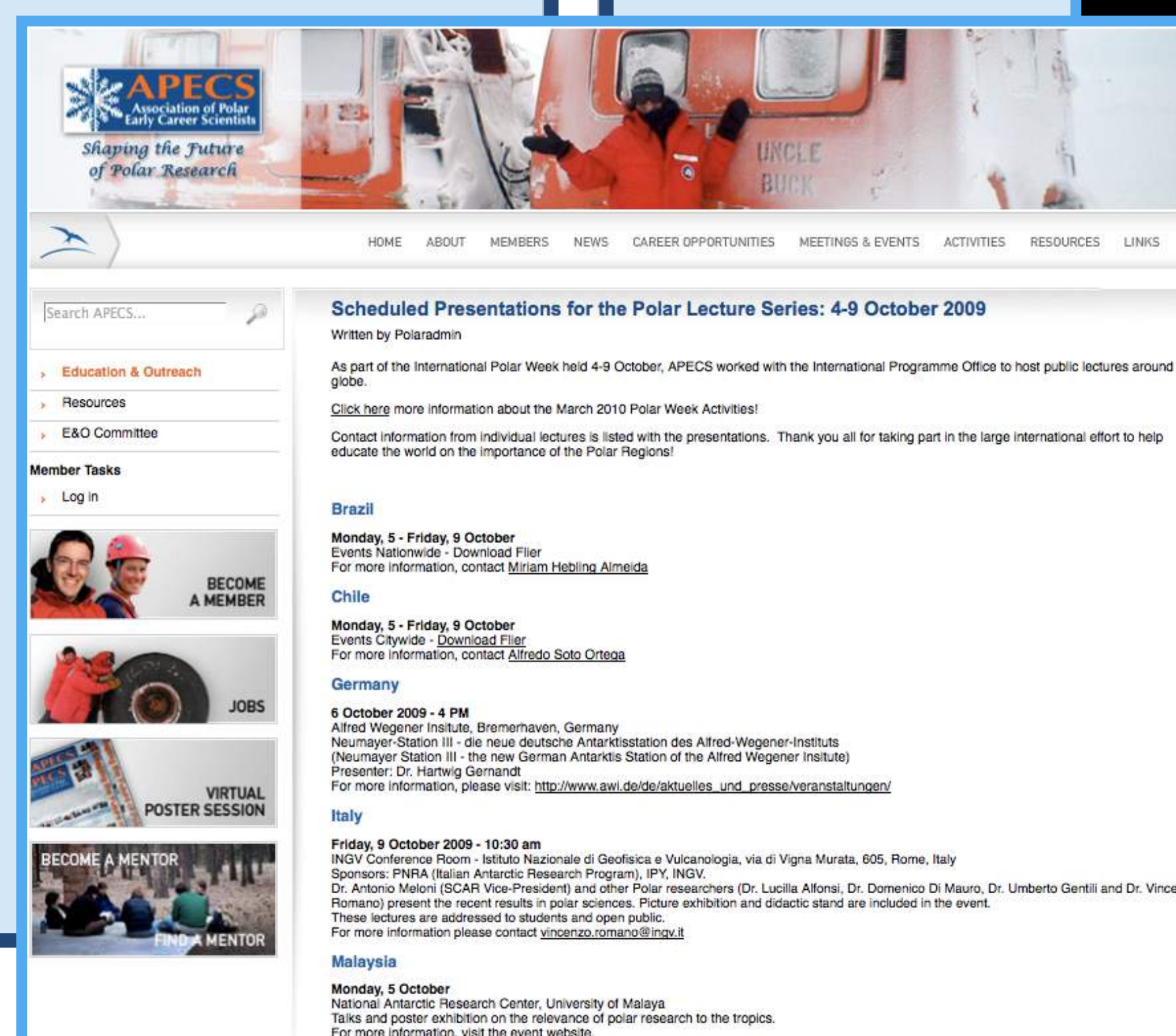


Figure 3 (left): A partial listing of events from the October 2009 Polar Week event.

Figure 4 (above): Participating countries included: Brazil, Chile, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Malaysia, Zambia, India, New Zealand, Romania, Sweden, and the United States (Alaska).

For More Information:

<http://apecs.is/outreach/482-international-polar-week-lecture-series>

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