

Speaking With One Voice - geoscience messaging in a fragmented community

A technical session at RFG2018 sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences.

The geoscience community is exceedingly diverse, in experience, expertise and point of view. This poses challenges when the community needs to act in a concerted fashion or to speak with a coordinated voice. Consequently, the geoscience voice is often not influential in public debates and geoscientists' expertise and experience is not often a significant voice in public policy discussions.

Geoscientists themselves contribute to the problem. In Canada, and in other countries, some geoscientists eschew broad-based, multi-disciplinary societies, preferring to organize themselves into relatively small specialist professional and learned societies that meet a common scientific or professional interest. Although this organizational model serves the interests of specialists, it does not provide the geoscience community at large with a unified voice that can speak on behalf of the community on matters of common concern, or an organization that can act in a broader context on behalf of the community at large.

To address this concern, geoscience societies in some countries have come together to form an overarching umbrella society that can represent them in communications and activities in the broader public forum. In others, single geoscience societies have evolved that represent a national community (e.g. the Geological Society, U.K.) or a multi-national community (e.g. EGU) and can claim to speak on behalf of a wide spectrum of the geoscience community.

This session is intended to explore the experiences of top-tier national geoscience organizations in representing the views of their national geoscience community in both national and international professional and public forums - how are they organized, how do they communicate, what are the advantages and challenges of a strong central organization versus a large number of small specialist groups. We are looking for case histories, both successful and unsuccessful, as well as assessments of strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. Invited presentations will detail the organization and communications strategies of various national geoscience bodies. Presentations are also invited from those who have interacted with, used or otherwise benefitted from interaction with national geoscience bodies.

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