CIRCUS SESSION
Wednesday 1 September
11:30-12:30

Olivia Bañez, Coral Reef Policy and Communications Coordinator, Guam Coral Reef Initiative, Guam Department of Agriculture: 'Let's take a field trip! Promoting place-based learning with virtual field trips in Guam'

Outdoor exploration is an effective tool for environmental education and promoting stewardship. However, field trip programs are often resource-intensive, and ocean environments can be especially difficult to explore since they may incur liability issues, require swimming competency, or necessitate travel for landlocked communities. Given these challenges, "virtual field trips" can be an innovative and low-cost accessible tool to introduce students to local environments and inspire curiosity in the natural world.

The Guam Coral Reef Initiative (GCRI) has created several bespoke virtual field trips featuring Guam's coastal habitats and marine preserves. GCRI virtual field trips are interactive presentations with clickable elements that lead to photos and videos of local marine life and environments, simulating real-life exploration. These virtual field trips also pose questions and prompt viewers to choose where to explore, promoting inquiry-based learning. The virtual field trip content can be tailored to a wide range of audiences and can be facilitated by communications professionals as interactive presentations, by informal or formal educators, or used by students independently. These localized virtual field trips reduce barriers to exploring marine ecosystems and can aid organizations in amplifying ocean literacy and encouraging local outdoor exploration.

Virtual field trip preview: https://www.guamcoralreefs.info/resources/#virtual-field-trips

Additional contributors:
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Jessica Bradford, Special Projects Manager, Ocean Tracking Network at Dalhousie University: 'Apoqnmatulti'k: Sharing Stories of Etuaptmumk-Guided Aquatic Research and Knowledge Sharing'

Indigenous and coastal communities have long-standing relationships with the ocean, yet their knowledge is often overlooked in science communication. Apoqnmatulti'k ("we help each other") is a partnership that brings together Mi'kmaw, local, and western scientific knowledge holders to better understand valued aquatic species' movements in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia, Canada). Guided by Etuaptmumk, or Two-Eyed Seeing, the project models collaborative capacity sharing, knowledge co-generation, and inclusive knowledge mobilization.

A key part of the partnership is co-developing communications and outreach activities that strengthen citizen engagement and ocean literacy. Through community dialogue, accessible storytelling, and collaborative knowledge sharing (e.g., community events, local newspaper publications, children's book creation, & other outreach activities), the project connects research with the lived experiences of Indigenous/coastal communities, fostering broader public understanding of ocean ecosystems.

This 'circus session' will demonstrate how inclusive partnerships can build trust, enhance communication, and create opportunities for citizens to engage with ocean science. By sharing lessons learned from working across multiple knowledge systems, attendees will gain practical insights for strengthening public engagement and knowledge exchange in their own work.

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Eve Galimany, Researcher, ICATMAR / ICM-CSIC: 'Addressing the missing connection between sign language and ocean science'

Ocean literacy aims to improve the world population's knowledge of the ocean with the goal to create a connection between citizenship and marine ecosystems promoting conservation and respect. To reach this ambitious goal, there are two key factors, communication and diversity. Each audience is engaged differently, and they are all targets to ocean literacy. However, a sector that is often forgotten is the deaf community, with over 72 million of people using sign language (SL) globally. As all other languages, they were created locally and currently, it is estimated that there are more than 300 different SL in the world, each with its signs and structure. But most SL lack marine specific signs, sometimes even very basic marine vocabulary. Addressing this issue depends on the collaboration of scientists and SL experts, who need to join forces to co-create the most adequate signs for the deaf community to use and engage with the ocean.

We recommend that each SL should create their own signs, based on the missing vocabulary, but the method to develop best signs should be common. Therefore, this "circus session" (30 minutes) will present the methodology developed in the project Sea of Signs in Barcelona, detailing the co-creation of different signs, including species and ecological concepts. The final objective of the "circus" will be to co-develop a sign for Ocean Decade or another related concept.

Additional contributors:
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Germana Barata, science journalist at the University of Campinas (Unicamp) and coordinator of the Ressoa Oceano Network, Brazil: 'Press releases as a strategy to amplify ocean visibility in the Brazilian media'

In 2023, the Ressoa Oceano, a collaborative communication network endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade, established a partnership with the Agência Bori, a science news agency, to disseminate ocean science under journalistic embargo in Brazil through press releases. This partnership resulted, by April 2026, in the curation and production of 80 press releases, among which 67 on unpublished papers, as well as the first-hand dissemination of 4 opinion articles, 3 studies, 2 books, 2 reports, and 2 interviews to over 3,000 Brazilian journalists registered in the agency. These contents generated more than 1,300 tracked mentions in other media outlets, averaging 17 repercussions per study, the majority from research published in open-access Brazilian journals.

The topics that raised the most interest were plastic and oil pollution, global phenomena related to climate change, such as El Niño, ocean acidification, and coral bleaching, and new or endangered species. The curation also sought to ensure gender equity: more than half of the author-spokespersons for the studies released are female, which contributes to highlighting women scientists.

The replication of ocean research in hundreds of media outlets across Brazil – from nationally circulated newspapers to local news websites – shows that this partnership helps popularize access to scientific knowledge and raises awareness about the ocean in the Brazilian media.

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Kirsty Bradley, Fisheries Scientist, Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS): '#UNBOXED – a session to help scientist zoom out of their technical focus and think outside the box'

Scientists often travel down career path towards detailed technical understanding, towards a specialism. While on this path perspectives may become narrow. A common assumption is that their audience will understand the technical information, when really, they can easily be left on the sidelines. Given multidisciplinary approaches are becoming a key component to tackle global ocean challenges, presenting science in a digestible format is paramount, even to other scientists.

This circus session will encourage scientists to "unbox" or "zoom out" of their technical area and consider the new perspectives. Thinking outside the box and underlining the needs of different audiences will be the key components of this session. The result will be an increased consideration of perspectives, better communication skills and opportunities to recognise multidisciplinary cross over and collaboration. Ultimately, this session provides scientists with a "wider view" to increase science impact and extend understanding across audiences.

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Jessica-Marie Karlsen, Independent Researcher: 'Beyond the Trophy: Legitimacy through the Social Barometer in High-Stakes Marine Industries (DSM)'

Deep-Sea Mining (DSM) is emerging under conditions of profound ecological and social uncertainty, where traditional Social License to Operate (SLO) – winning a "license" and putting it on the shelf – fails to capture how legitimacy evolves. This interactive workshop introduces the Social Barometer, an emerging conceptual framework that seeks to make changing legitimacy conditions more visible over time. It distinguishes between an Ethical Gate (institutional and codified norms) and a Moral Gate (socially negotiated values and cultural norms), highlighting the Social Gap between them and tentatively framing legitimacy as a fourth dimension of the Quadruple Bottom Line.

Participants will be divided into two groups representing society (Moral Gate) and regulators/institutions (Ethical Gate) and engage with contrasting perspectives on deep-sea mining. As the "Noble Storyteller", I will facilitate the discussion while visually mapping participants' reflections through the emerging Social Barometer framework, showing the Social Gap where it emerges. Rather than measuring legitimacy, the Social Barometer is being developed to trace changing legitimacy conditions over time by following them like a shadow, observing how they emerge and evolve. The session is designed for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and others interested in legitimacy and governance in high-uncertainty marine contexts.

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Sabine Matallana Surget, Founder & CEO, SciImpact Global Ltd; Director, International Research Hub for Marine Pollutions (CIC); Adjunct Professor, Sorbonne University: 'When Papers Are Not Enough: A Professor's Journey to Real Impact through Ocean Communication'

How can academics move strategically beyond publications to reach audiences, foster understanding of the ocean, and contribute to the UN Ocean Decade? This 30-minute circus session uses the case study of a Professor and PI in marine pollution to show why communication should become systematic in academia, not an optional add-on. It explores how ocean communication can make complex data and invisible processes visible to public, journalists and policy audiences without diluting science. It draws on 20 years of marine biotechnology applied to oil spills, plastic and sunscreen pollution. The session shares positive lessons from moving beyond publications to communicate research across websites, media, LinkedIn, conferences, short videos and documentary formats, showing why visibility is essential to impact.

The session aims to bring more ocean academics into CommOCEAN discussions, recognising their underrepresentation in communication spaces. Participants leave with ideas to turn complex research into a workflow strengthening ocean literacy and citizen engagement.

Then, a separate 45-minute documentary screening would extend the discussion by featuring the behind-the-scenes story of a five-year academic project on plastic pollution in SE Asia. Directed by the project PI and presenter of the circus session — a woman academic leading a large UK-funded programme — the film gives scientists a unique voice and offers a rare example of ocean communication from within academic leadership.