

**Workshop Report of**  
**Children's Book Series ASM workshop**

**2006 LTER All Scientists Meeting (ASM), Estes Park, Co.**

Organizers: Monica Elser, Diane McKnight, Shelly Sommers

The purpose of the workshop was to provide more information about the book series to prospective authors and scientists for the LTER sites. This background was supplemented by a DVD from a workshop in August 2005 that was made available at the ASM and was previously distributed to the LTER site PI's and Ed reps.

The workshop was attended by about 35 ASM participants, including Ed reps from about 10 sites and other scientists and students. The first presentation reviewed the background and timeline of development of the Schoolyard Children's Book Series. The involvement of teachers and children in the initial development of the first two books was described.

Monica Elser discussed the mission of the book series. The importance of the books fitting within the mission of the Schoolyard LTER programs at each of the sites was emphasized. An overview of Book Series DVD was also provided. Monica also led a discussion of the need for support for the development of the book, including funding for the advance to the illustrator and other expenses through establishment of a LTER Schoolyard Book Series Fund. The participants provided feedback in support of this plan, and subsequent email correspondence supporting this approach is provided at the end of this report.

Shelly Sommer explained the process for the educational outreach activities in the development of *The Lost Seal*. This outreach activity involved teachers and their students from elementary schools in four countries. The 413 pieces of artwork and comments from the children were placed on a website about the book and a small subset was included in the book to emphasize the international interest in the Antarctic.

The publisher, Amy Rinehart gave a presentation on the development of a book proposal, which included examples. This was followed by much discussion and further explanation. After the workshop, Amy Rinehart met with a number of participants who were interested in preparing a book proposal. As a result of the discussion a decision was made to revise the prospectus for the Book Series such that a prospective author would submit an initial proposal to both the publisher and the Children's Book Series Editorial Committee. The revised prospectus is attached.

The workshop closed with a presentation by Colleen Flanagan about the outreach activities that have been an outgrowth of the first book in the series, which was the development of a related teacher's guide for *My Water Comes from the Mountains*. Carol Landis then discussed the plan for a simpler teacher's edition for the second book, *The Lost Seal*.

Following the workshop, discussions were held on modifications to the prospectus for the book series. The revised prospectus will be forwarded to the LTER Executive Committee for their consideration this fall.

Henry,

The LTER Children's Book Series will be a wonderful tool for educators connected with the LTER network. A revolving fund to support initial publication costs would be a great way to get this going.

Karen Oberhauser  
Cedar Creek SLTER  
Oberh001@umn.edu

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Support for LTER Children's Books:

Children's books around the research and ecosystems of the LTER sites could be an extremely productive tool to connect the communities to the nearby LTER sites. Books could be used to support LTER's goal to outreach to the community and to take action to increase environmental literacy in the public. Local environmental examples presented to children are powerful motivators for student curiosity in science and well being of their local environment. I encourage you to fund the advances needed for the books. We attended an inspiring session with Dian Mcknight here at Estes park. We already have ideas!

Lis Young-Isebrand  
Cedar Creek SLTER

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LTER Network office:

In attending the Children's Book Series ASM workshop, it became apparent that a special fund should be established to encourage book 'start-ups.' This might be as little as \$15-20k in a revolving fund but would facilitate 3-4 LTER sites providing advances to professional illustrators.

Thanks,  
Michael Erwin  
VCR-LTER

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## **DRAFT PROSPECTUS FOR LTER CHILDREN'S BOOK SERIES**

Draft title for series: The Schoolyard Series of NSF's Long Term Ecological Research Network

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The LTER community recognizes the importance of outreach to elementary through high school students (K-12) as part of the LTER community at the individual research sites.

The LTER science community is drawn from a network of 26 long term research sites, and includes academic and government scientists and educators, graduate and undergraduate students, and professional staff. The research conducted at LTER sites is diverse, encompassing all aspects of ecology and ecosystem science, as well as investigations in atmospheric science, hydrology, and geomorphology.

The underlying "schoolyard" approach emphasizes the connection to local communities, for which the LTER site can serve as a "schoolyard" for understanding ecology and environmental science. This approach is particularly consistent with the development of empathy for their local environment ("Environmental Empathy") discussed by Sobel (1996)\* as a basis for teaching elementary age students.

The four major themes of the LTER network that are important for development of a children's book series are;

- 1) Integration of ecology and earth science within the individual sites and across the site network
- 2) Long-term perspective.
- 3) The schoolyard approach (i.e. connecting to the local community).
- 4) A connection to a scientist and/or to scientific questions that are being studied at the LTER site.

The research groups at each site strive to make advances at the frontier of the specific scientific areas of research while continuously integrating new results into an evolving and expanding understanding of the ecosystem. Further, the LTER site scientists work towards a monitoring program for their ecosystem that will provide understanding of how ecosystems function at decadal and century time scales, trying to anticipate the future in the design and upgrading of their monitoring programs.

The design of the LTER Children's Book Series should reflect these successful themes of the LTER site network.

### **II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LTER CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

Based on the success and format of *My Water Comes from the Mountains*, and the next book on the publishing plan which was published in 2006, *The Lost Seal*, the proposed series will consist of 9<sup>1/4</sup> x 10<sup>1/4</sup> inch illustrated hardcover books intended for children ages 5-10. The multi-tiered market for the books will include schools, libraries, and the general book trade, as well as specialty distribution through such outlets as Scholastic Book Clubs, school fairs, and specialty re-binders. However, because of funding limitations in most school districts, it is expected that the LTER sites will actively be involved in the introduction of the series into the educational

community located near their site by such means as distributing books to school libraries and for classroom use or developing curriculum guides for teachers, for example. There are several ways that the LTER site can partner with Moonlight Publishing to help underwrite a project that meets the unique needs of their community, and some guidelines are detailed in Attachment A.

Participating LTER sites should consider this as an opportunity to interpret their sites for their constituents, keeping in mind that arcane or very regional subjects stand the least chance of succeeding in the marketplace. Ideally, a book might also have international appeal, increasing the possibility for translated editions that would further spread the LTER site's message.

The books should be strictly interpretive and not advocate any particular point of view. Furthermore, this is not the place for anthropomorphism, though authors and illustrators should strive to make the books as pleasurable and accessible as possible. A storyline that connects a character, animal, or situation is ideal. The storyline or narrative should have a beginning and an end, and should be based on real environmental relationships, or a real incident or situation. The books should have realistic illustrations and may also incorporate children's artwork and comments. Once agreed upon, a mission statement will be printed on the copyright page of each book, stating the LTER site's commitment to accuracy in both the text and illustrations.

### **III. OVERSIGHT: BOOK PROPOSAL PROCESS**

The LTER network will establish an editorial review board of three members who will prepare a mission statement for the series and review each proposed book project. The editorial board will work with Moonlight Publishing in preparing and updating the publishing plan for the series, which will be based on 1-3 books per year.

It is strongly suggested that before an LTER site begins putting together a formal proposal, that a preliminary idea for a book project, with the approval of the lead principal investigator(s), be submitted to the editorial board and the publisher for consideration. A few short paragraphs detailing the idea for the book is sufficient for the preliminary review.

The formal review process shall begin with the proposal submitted to the editorial review board and to Moonlight Publishing. A proposal will consist of a draft text manuscript, an example of illustrations, a timeline for preparation of the text and illustrations, and a plan for introduction of the books to local schools and other educational organizations near the LTER site or in the region (see attachment B for guidelines). If children's artwork is to be incorporated in the book, a plan for that activity and integration with the LTER site's website should be included. The publisher will review the proposal for marketability and overall fit within the series, and then recommend the project to the editorial board for further consideration.

The editorial board will then review proposals for content and appropriate material, and ensure that the subject matter and presentation is in line with the mission statement for the series. The board will then accept or reject a proposal for inclusion on the publishing plan for the series. If a proposal is rejected but the board feels that with some re-working it could be accepted for publication at a later date, the editorial board will recommend appropriate changes.

Once the proposal is recommended by the editorial board, the publisher will evaluate the proposed book for suitability and marketability in the general book trade, and may suggest further revisions. Once the publisher accepts the book proposal based on suitability, Moonlight Publishing will prepare an estimate of the support required for publishing the proposed book. This estimate will consider the plans from the proposing site for purchasing books for distribution to participating local or regional educational organizations. The proposing site will submit a proposal for funding support to the LTER Children's Book Series Fund which will include the estimate from the publisher and any advances required for the illustrator and the author. The committee managing the Fund will award funding to the proposed project based on available resources and other proposals.

#### **IV. PUBLISHING PROCESS AND EXECUTION**

After the editorial board and Moonlight Publishing accepts a project for placement on the publishing plan, Moonlight Publishing will evaluate what publishing season and year to publish the book in, add the title to the publishing plan, and draft a schedule accordingly. Schedule dates can only be upheld if all materials are turned in on time and all parties agree to hold to the schedule dates that include participation from them. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator or co-principal investigators for the participating LTER site to ensure that the schedule is met.

##### **Fall Publishing Schedule:**

January 1: receipt of manuscript and art

February 15: Author review of edited manuscript and queries from copyeditor

March 1: Final copyedited manuscript returned to Moonlight

April 1: Author/Illustrator review of page proofs from designer

May 15: Final pages and files from designer

June 1: Ship files to printer

July 1: Color corrections

August 1: Books Print

September 15: Books in warehouse

##### **Spring Publishing Schedule:**

June 1: receipt of manuscript and art

July 15: Author review of edited manuscript and queries from copyeditor

August 1: Final copyedited manuscript returned to Moonlight

September 1: Author/Illustrator review of page proofs from designer

October 15: Final pages and files from designer

November 1: Ship files to printer

December 1: Color corrections

January 1: Books Print

February 15: Books in warehouse

The schedules outlined above may vary due to sales and marketing opportunities for individual titles, but the timelines will be consistent.

Moonlight Publishing will make all vendor decisions for each project.

\*Sobel, D. 1996. Beyond Ecophobia. Nature Literacy Series Number 1. The Orion Society, Great Barrington, MA (413 528-4422, fax 413 528-0676, [orion@bcn.net](mailto:orion@bcn.net))