

LTERASM arts&humanities workshop rpt.doc 10/29/06

Report of a Workshop at the LTER All-Scientists Meeting, Estes Park, CO, Sept. 21-23, 2006.

Conveners: Fred Swanson (AND) and Tim Kratz (NTL)

Title: Linking science with arts and humanities and at LTER sites.

### **Abstract**

The workshop began with Kratz and Swanson describing programs at the North Temperate Lakes and Andrews Forest LTER sites, which bring together scientists and humanists in the field and other settings to confer about the nature of ecosystems and ecological/environmental change (see: <http://www.news.wisc.edu/12738.html> and <http://www.fsl.orst.edu/lter/research/related/writers.cfm?topnav=37>). These programs involved nature writers, poets, visual and performance artists, and philosophers. The objectives of these programs include using the tools of the arts and humanities to learn about these ecosystems and to communicate LTER science to the general public. The 18 participants in the workshop discussed engagement of the art/humanities in LTER sites in terms of:

1. Engaging artists so they can use their art to communicate science to the public.
2. Engage creative people in the places where we work to carry out their own inquiry and communicate their own impressions to the public.
3. Encourage scientists to creatively express themselves in the arts/humanities and artists to find creative ways to couple the worlds of science and the arts in ways to further our common goals.

Other LTER activities linking with writing include children's literature, environmental history, and science journalism. Specific recommendations from the workshop are:

1. Promote more field collaborations of people from the sciences and humanities within LTER programs and sites.
2. Find ways to encourage the artistic work of scientists (including students) in LTER programs.
3. Add a photographic component to the Trends book effort.

### **Workshop report**

This workshop involved sharing of experiences and brainstorming among groups that have such programs, those who are interested in developing them, and individuals with interests that bridge arts and sciences.

Ideas leading to possible action items:

- Can there be a photographic contribution to the Trends book effort – possibly by posting chronosequence (“then and now”) photo sets on a webpage associated with the book?

- Develop field workshops with artists and scientists that lead to products posted on the web. Multiple sites could use the same themes so comparisons could be made. Frame these efforts as a concept (within a template) that anyone or any site can use.
- A significant number of individuals at LTER sites – both students and scientists – are practicing artists/humanists as well as scientists. How can these interests be encouraged and engaged to enhance site and network LTER programs?

Other perceptions/assertions:

- Arts help engage people in the sciences.
- The arts may shorten the lag time from data to publication – and certainly to public understanding.
- Should the art work be in a competition format? Judged/juried? Some argument for yes (including from the artist's perspective) and some for no.
- Key ingredients in planning gatherings: theme, identify candidate artists, invite them, broader communications, outlet for the products of the effort.

See notes by Carl Bowser below for amplification.

## LTER and the arts – notes from Carl Bowser

### *Rationale*

Outreach with LTER is designed to inform the public through traditional avenues including:

Scientific publications and books

Current news items

Site and intersite documents:

Brochures, DVD, CD, Tape

Information released from NSF

Congressional contacts

Other avenues for public awareness and recruitment to the LTER program concepts are available and may well inform a public that could be interested in the goals and objectives, but are not “scientifically inclined.

The aesthetic elements of the LTER sites and general public concern for our environmental future are shared concerns that the arts and humanities community should be able to embrace.

Scientists within the LTER program have strong environmental ethics and concerns, and those include the aesthetic elements of their sites as well as ecosystems in general. The written word, visual media, and performing arts are generally appreciated by scientists and non-scientists alike, and the arts community could provide a strong partner in linking the LTER goals with a broader public not reached by our traditional outreach approaches.

The arts community and the scientific community have many common goals, and even approaches to their respective disciplines.

Artists are keenly sensitive to nuances of color, light, tone, texture, mood, and rhythm and are keen observers of the environment we share in common. We could learn to better observe and promote our science if we better understood the language of the visual media, and the written word. Workshops could be promoted to help sites better illustrate their sites (to both scientists and non-scientists).

The arts community understands well the need to communicate with their audience, and have insights into communication and expression of ideas that could benefit scientists in their need to communicate with the general public.

A partnership with the arts and scientific community would be mutually beneficial.

### *Background*

Writers workshop concept embraced by Fred Swanson and others.

Visual arts workshop sponsored by NTL (Kratz and Magnuson)

### *Approach (Ideas suggested)*

Local, regional, to national art shows of work from LTER site inspired works from selected site workshops with artists

Expansion of writer's workshop concept to broader range of sites or biomes.

Bottom up submissions of artwork to network office and display works on sites and web.

Partner a writer/artist with a specific site and site designee & provide travel grant/stipend for a commissioned work.

Call for proposals from artists to travel to specific LTER site to work with local LTER scientist(s) to produce a piece for later inclusion in an exhibit that would travel among sites and perhaps other galleries.

### *Short-term*

A web based of contributed works from LTER participants and artists (juried? Open?)

Proposal to LTER CC for support for early, high visibility, "product" (perhaps partly supported by the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts). The model for this product to be determined based on one of the approaches outlined above.

Annotated bibliography of resource materials that would help LTER sites see the potential for collaboration between the arts/humanities and ecosystem science.

### *Long-term*

Promote a long-term interaction among artists and scientists to produce products that capture attention of general public.

Work toward an ongoing dialogue between art/humanities and LTER with the purpose of promoting arts in the service of environmental change.

An illustrated book with writings/photographs/paintings that would sell (perhaps payback to offset the cost of the project). Solicit well known artists with a background and tradition in nature, the landscape (John McPhee, Barry Lopez, Jack Djakinga (sp), ----- (Build a list of recommended writers, artists, musicians who might respond to such a call.)

Participants in workshop:

Four leaders volunteered to help lead further efforts:

- Kristina Stinson, HF, [stinson@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:stinson@fas.harvard.edu)
- Carl Bowser, NTL, [silverpixel@tds.net](mailto:silverpixel@tds.net)
- Tim Kratz, NTL, [tkkratz@wisc.edu](mailto:tkkratz@wisc.edu)
- Fred Swanson, AND, [fred.swanson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:fred.swanson@oregonstate.edu)

Others participating included:

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- Julia Jones, AND, [jonesj@geo.oregonstate.edu](mailto:jonesj@geo.oregonstate.edu)
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