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COMMUNICATING ARCTIC SCIENCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA - EXPERIENCE OF A RESEARCHER-DRIVEN EFFORT OF @OCEANSEAICENPI

Alexey K. Pavlov (*Norwegian Polar Institute, Fram Centre, Norway*)

Mats A. Granskog (*Norwegian Polar Institute, Fram Centre, Norway*)

Stephen R. Hudson (*Norwegian Polar Institute, Fram Centre, Norway*)

Sebastian Gerland (*Norwegian Polar Institute, Fram Centre, Norway*)

pavlov.alexey.k@gmail.com

As researchers we are constantly being encouraged by funding agencies, policy-makers and journalists to conduct effective outreach and to communicate our latest research findings. And being a part of the unique and relatively small Arctic community (Polar, in general) we understand the necessity of communicating our research in order to highlight the importance of polar regions in light of the ongoing climate change. We all wish to become better science communicators! However, how would one do it on a regular basis? How would one do it not only as a project-based effort resulting in outreach projects and resources with a limited lifetime? Most critical, how would one do it without specially allocated resources in terms of funds and communication officers, on a lab or small research group level?

Social media is a first answer that one might think about, and it has become a powerful and inexpensive tool (virtually at no cost) for communicating science to different target audiences. But despite all its advantages, there are still relatively few researchers, research institutions and particularly smaller research groups that are exploring the full breadth of possibilities brought by social media for reaching out to the general public, journalists, policy-makers, stake-holders, and research community.

When it comes to practice, some essential difficulties can be encountered, which in the first place include identifying key target groups, defining of the framework for sharing responsibilities and interaction within the research group, and finally, choosing a currently up-to-date social medium as a technical solution for communicating your research. In this presentation we (as Oceans and Sea Ice Group at the Norwegian Polar Institute) share positive experience of developing and maintaining a researcher-driven outreach effort currently implemented through a combination of Instagram and Twitter platforms. We tell about potential pitfalls and challenges that small research groups could face, and how to better overcome them, and the benefits and challenges of having researchers directly involved in the posting, without an intermediate communications expert. This will hopefully inspire and help other research groups and labs to conduct their own effective Arctic science communication.